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1865–1868

The Meaning of Freedom: The Promise of Reconstruction

 Listen to Chapter 12
on MyHistoryLab

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

12-1 What did freedom mean to nearly four million people who had been slaves?

12-2 How did the government help former slaves acquire land of their own?

12-3 What was the Freedmen's Bureau, its goals, and how effective was it?

12-4 What role did the black church play in African-American life in the post-war decades?

12-5 Why was education so important to African Americans, and what were the ways in which they were able to obtain it?

12-6 Describe the violence directed at southern black people in the aftermath of the war.

12-7 What were the main elements of the separate Reconstruction programs offered by President Johnson and the Radical Republicans in Congress, as well as the South's reaction to these plans?

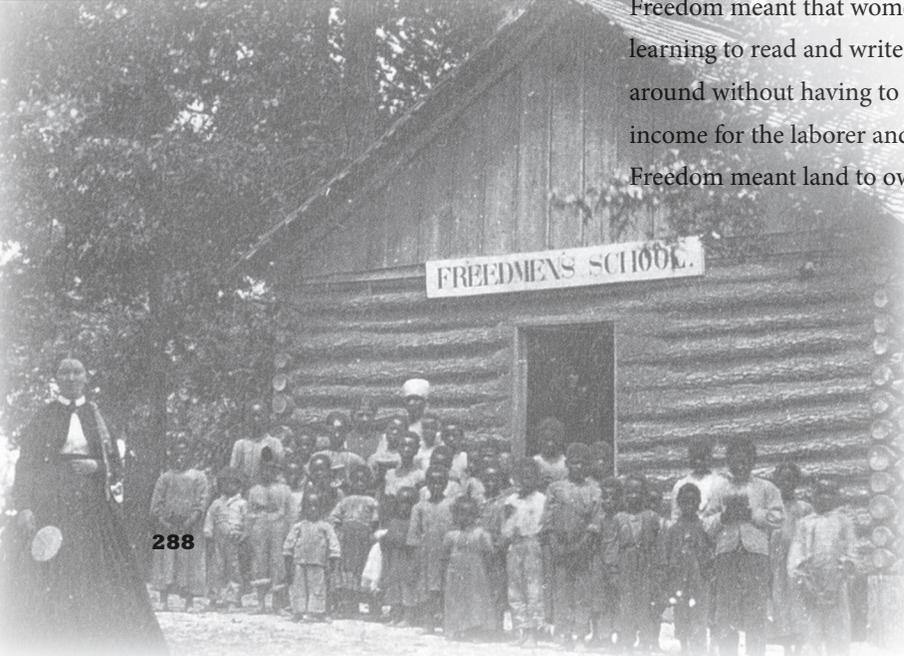
Many Thousand Gone

No more auction block for me,
No more, no more,
No more auction block for me,
Many thousand gone.
No more driver's lash for me,
No more, no more,
No more driver's lash for me,
Many thousand gone.
No more peck of salt for me,
No more, no more,
No more peck of salt for me,
Many thousand gone.
No more iron chain for me,
No more, no more.
No more iron chain for me,
Many thousand gone.

An African-American emancipation song

What did freedom mean to a people who had endured and survived 250 years of enslavement in America? What did the future hold for nearly four million African Americans in 1865? Freedom meant many things to many people. But to most former slaves, it meant that families would stay together. Freedom meant that women would no longer be sexually exploited. Freedom meant learning to read and write. Freedom meant organizing churches. Freedom meant moving around without having to obtain permission. Freedom meant that labor would produce income for the laborer and not the master. Freedom meant working without the whip. Freedom meant land to own, cultivate, and live on. Freedom meant a trial before a jury if

Students assembled in front of James Plantation School in North Carolina shortly after the Civil War ended in 1865. Compared to many such schools, this one was exceptionally well constructed. Notice the students' clothes and lack of shoes.



charged with a crime. Freedom meant voting. Freedom meant citizenship and having the same rights as white people.



Years after slavery ended, a former Texas slave, Margrett Nillin, was asked if she preferred slavery or freedom. She answered unequivocally, “Well, it’s dis way, in slavery I owns nothin’ and never owns nothin’. In freedom I’s own de home and raise de family. All dat causes me worryment and in slavery I has no worryment, but I takes freedom.”

The End of Slavery

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12-1 What did freedom mean to nearly four million people who had been slaves?

With the collapse of slavery, many black people were quick to inform white people that whatever loyalty, devotion, and cooperation they might have shown as slaves had never reflected their inner feelings and attitudes. Near Opelousas, Louisiana, a Union officer asked a young black man why he did not love his master, and the youth responded sharply, “When my master begins to lub me, den it’ll be time enough for me to lub him. What I wants is to get away. I want to take me off from dis plantation, where I can be free.”

In North Carolina, planter Robert P. Howell was disappointed that a loyal slave named Lovet fled at the first opportunity. “He was about my age and I had always treated him more as a companion than a slave. When I left I put everything in his charge, told him that he was free, but to remain on the place and take care of things. He promised me faithfully that he would, but he was the first one to leave . . . and I did not see him for several years.”

Emancipation was traumatic for many former masters. A Virginia freedman remembered that “Miss Polly died right after the surrender, she was so hurt that all the negroes was going to be free.” Another former slave, Robert Falls, recalled that his master assembled the slaves to inform them they were free. “I hates to do it, but I must. You all ain’t my niggers no more. You is free. Just as free as I am. Here I have raised you all to work for me, and now you are going to leave me. I am an old man, and I can’t get along without you. I don’t know what I am going to do.” In less than a year, he was dead. Falls attributed his master’s death to the end of slavery: “It killed him.”



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Differing Reactions of Former Slaves

Other slaves bluntly displayed their reaction to years of bondage. Aunt Delia, a cook with a North Carolina family, revealed that she secretly had been gaining retribution for the indignity of servitude. “How many times I spit in the biscuits and peed in the coffee just to get back at them mean white folks.” In Goodman, Mississippi, a slave named Caddy learned she was free and rushed from the field to find her owner. “Caddy threw down that hoe, she marched herself up to the big house, then, she looked around and found the mistress. She went over to the mistress, she flipped up her dress and told the white woman to do something. She said it mean and ugly. This is what she said: ‘Kiss my ass!’”

In contrast, some slaves, especially elderly ones, were apprehensive about freedom. On a South Carolina plantation, an older black woman refused to accept emancipation. “I ain’ no free nigger! I is got a marster and mistiss! Dee right dar in de great house. Ef you don’ b’lieve me, you go dar an’ see.”

Reuniting Black Families

As slavery ended, the most urgent need for many freed people was finding family members who had been sold away from them. Slavery had not destroyed the black family. Husbands, wives, and children went to great lengths to reassemble their families after the Civil War.

For years and even decades after the end of slavery, advertisements in black newspapers appealed for information about missing kinfolk. For example, the *Colored Tennessean* published the following notice on August 5, 1865:

Saml. Dove wishes to know of the whereabouts of his mother, Areno, his sisters Maria, Nezhiah and Peggy, and his brother Edmond, who were owned by Geo. Dove of Rockingham County, Shenandoah Valley, Va. Sold in Richmond, after which Saml. and Edmond were taken to Nashville, Tenn., by Joe Mick; Areno was left at the Eagle Tavern, Richmond. Respectfully yours, Saml. Dove, Utica, New York.

In North Carolina a northern journalist met a middle-aged black man “plodding along, staff in hand, and apparently very footsore and tired.” The nearly exhausted freedman explained that he had walked almost 600 miles looking for his wife and children, who had been sold four years earlier.

There were emotional reunions as family members found each other after years of separation. Ben and Betty Dodson had been apart for 20 years when Ben found her in a refugee camp after the war. “Glory! glory! hallelujah,” he shouted as he hugged his wife. “Dis is my Betty, shuah. I foun’ you at las’. I’s hunted and hunted till I track you up here. I’s boun’ to hunt till I fin’ you if you’s alive.”

Other searches had more heart-wrenching results. Husbands and wives sometimes learned that their spouses had remarried during the separation. Believing his wife had died, the husband of Laura Spicer remarried—only to learn after the war that Laura was still alive. Sadly, he wrote to her but refused to meet: “I would come and see you but I know I could not bear it. I want to see you and I don’t want to see you. I love you just as well as I did the last day I saw you, and it will not do for you and I to meet.”

Tormented, he wrote again pledging his love: “Laura I do not think that I have change any at all since I saw you last—I thinks of you and my children every day of my life. Laura I do love you the same. My love to you never have failed. Laura, truly, I have got another wife, and I am very sorry that I am. You feels and seems to me as much like my dear loving wife, as you ever did Laura.”

One freedman testified to the close ties that bound many slave families when he replied bitterly to the claim that he had had a kind master who had fed him and never used the whip: “Kind! yes, he gib men corn enough, and he gib me pork enough, and he neber gib me one lick wid de whip, but whar’s my wife?—whar’s my chill’en? Take away de pork, I say; take away de corn, I can work and raise dese for myself, but gib me back de wife of my bosom, and gib me back my poor chill’en as was sold away.”

Land

12-2 How did the government help former slaves acquire land of their own?

As people embraced freedom and left their masters, they wanted land. Nineteenth-century Americans of virtually every background associated economic security with owning land. Families wanted to work land and prosper as self-sufficient yeomen. Former slaves believed their future as a free people was tied to the possession of land. But just as it had been impossible to abolish slavery without federal intervention, it would not be possible to procure land without the assistance of the U.S. government. At first, federal authorities seemed determined to make land available to freedmen.

Special Field Order #15

Shortly after his army arrived in Savannah—after having devastated Georgia—Union General William T. Sherman announced that freedmen would receive land.

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FREEDMAN'S VILLAGE, ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA.—[SEE PAGE 294.]

Former slaves assembled in a village near Washington, DC. Black people welcomed emancipation, but without land, education, or employment, they faced an uncertain future.

On January 16, 1865, he issued **Special Field Order #15**. This military directive set aside a 30-mile-wide tract of land along the Atlantic coast from Charleston, South Carolina, 245 miles south to Jacksonville, Florida. White owners had abandoned the land, and Sherman reserved it for black families. The head of each family would receive “possessory title” to 40 acres of land. Sherman also gave the freedmen the use of army mules—hence the slogan, “Forty acres and a mule.” (Mules, horses, and other draft animals were essential for plowing fields and harvesting many crops before agriculture became mechanized.)

Within six months, 40,000 freed people were working 400,000 acres in the South Carolina and Georgia low country and on the sea islands. Former slaves generally avoided the slave crops of cotton and rice and instead planted sweet potatoes and corn. They also worked together as families and kinfolk. They avoided the gang labor associated with slavery. Most husbands and fathers preferred that their wives and daughters not work in the fields as slave women had been forced to do. Black women who worked in the homes of white families were increasingly willing to resist what they considered the unreasonable demands of white women.

The Port Royal Experiment

Meanwhile, hundreds of former slaves had been cultivating land for three years. In late 1861 Union military forces carved out an enclave around Beaufort and Port Royal, South Carolina, that remained under federal authority for the rest of the war. White planters fled to the interior, leaving their slaves behind. Under the supervision of U.S. Treasury officials and northern reformers and missionaries who hurried south in 1862, ex-slaves began to work the land in what came to be known as the “**Port Royal Experiment**.” When Treasury agents auctioned off portions of the land for nonpayment of taxes, freedmen purchased some of it. But northern businessmen bought most of the real estate and then hired black people to raise cotton.

White owners sometimes returned to their former lands only to find that black families had taken charge. Black farmers told one former owner, “We own this land now, put it out of your head that it will ever be yours again.” And on one South Carolina sea island, white men were turned back by armed black men.

Special Field Order #15 General William Tecumseh Sherman issued this military directive in January 1865. It set aside lands along the coast from Charleston, South Carolina, to Jacksonville, Florida, for former slaves. President Andrew Johnson revoked the order six months later.

Port Royal Experiment An effort by northern white missionaries, educators, and businessmen in the Sea Islands near Beaufort, South Carolina, to transform former slaves into educated, reliable, and industrious wage earners. Most of the freedmen did not acquire the land they worked.

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The Freedmen's Bureau

12-3 What was the Freedmen's Bureau, its goals, and how effective was it?

Freedmen's Bureau Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in February 1865 to assist black and white Southerners left destitute by the Civil War.

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As the war ended in early 1865, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands—commonly called the **Freedmen's Bureau**. Created as a temporary agency to assist freedmen to make the transition to freedom, the bureau was placed under the control of the U.S. Army, and General Oliver O. Howard was put in command. Howard, a devout Christian who had lost an arm in the war, was eager to aid the freedmen.

The bureau was given enormous responsibilities. It was designed to help freedmen obtain land, gain an education, negotiate labor contracts with white planters, settle legal and criminal disputes involving black and white people, and provide food, medical care, and transportation for black and white people left destitute by the war. However, Congress never provided sufficient funds or personnel to carry out these tasks.

The Freedmen's Bureau never had more than 900 agents spread across the South from Virginia to Texas. Mississippi, for example, had 12 agents in 1866. One agent often served a county with a population of 10,000 to 20,000 freedmen. Few of the agents were black because few military officers were black. John Mercer Langston of Virginia was an inspector of schools assigned to the bureau's main office in Washington, DC; Major Martin R. Delany worked with freedmen on the South Carolina sea islands. Large portions of the South had been devastated by the war. Richmond, Atlanta, Columbia, South Carolina, and Charleston were in ruins. Railroads had been torn up. Factories were destroyed. Sherman's army laid waste to farms, plantations, and towns in Georgia and the Carolinas. Southern planters lost nearly four million human beings they had owned as property and had controlled as labor.

The need for assistance was desperate as thousands of black and white southerners endured disease and extreme privation as the Civil War ended. A terrible smallpox epidemic swept through the South and killed as many as one million newly freed people. The Bureau was overwhelmed as it tried to provide medical care to freedmen and thousands of white people who were suffering and dying from malnutrition, cholera, yellow fever, and pneumonia, as well as smallpox. The bureau established camps for the homeless, fed the hungry, and cared for orphans and the sick as best it could. By 1866 it had distributed more than 13 million rations, consisting of flour, corn meal, and sugar.

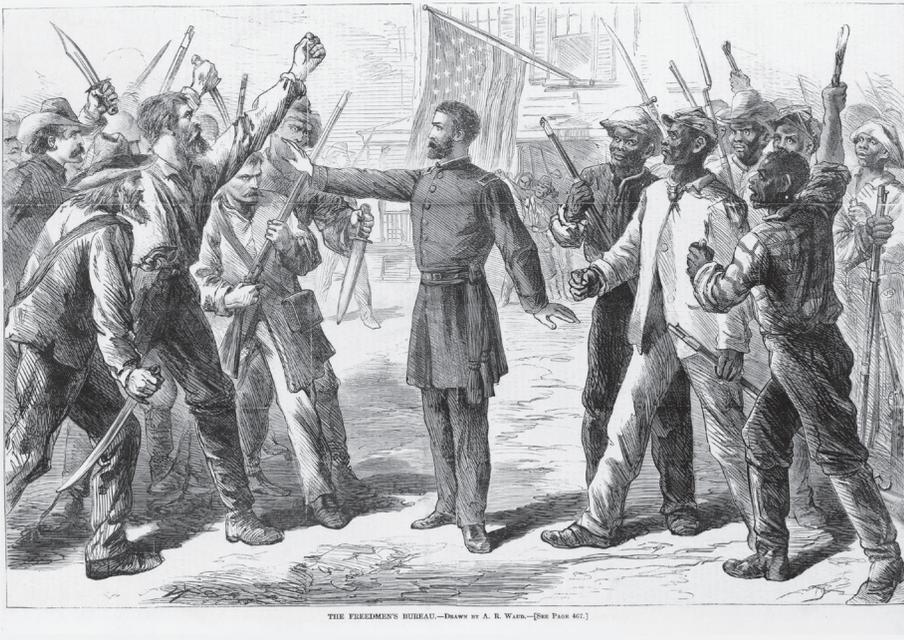
In July 1865 the bureau took a first step toward distributing land when General Howard issued Circular 13 ordering agents to “set aside” 40-acre plots for freedmen. But the allocation had hardly begun when the order was revoked, and authorities announced that land already distributed under Sherman's Special Field Order #15 was to be returned to its white owners.

The reason for this reversal was that Andrew Johnson, who had become president after Lincoln's assassination in April 1865, began to pardon hundreds and then thousands of former Confederates and restore their lands to them. General Howard had to tell black people that they had to relinquish the land they thought they had acquired. Speaking to some 2,000 freedmen on South Carolina's Edisto Island in October 1865, Howard pleaded with them to “lay aside their bitter feelings, and to become reconciled to their old masters.” A black man shouted a response, “Why, General Howard, why do you take away our lands? You take them from us who are true, always true to the Government! You give them to our all-time enemies. This is not right!”

A committee rejected Howard's appeal for reconciliation and forgiveness and an unhappy black man insisted the government provide land:

You ask us to forgive the landowners of our island. You only lost your right arm in war and might forgive them. The man who tied me to a tree and gave me 39 lashes and who stripped and flogged my mother and my sister and who will not let me stay in his empty hut except I will do his planting and be satisfied with his price and who combines with others to keep away land from me well knowing I would not have anything to do with him if I had land of my own—that man I cannot well forgive.

 Read on MyHistoryLab Document: The Freedmen's Bureau Bill (1865)



Freedmen's Bureau agents often found themselves in the middle of angry disputes over land and labor that erupted between black and white southerners. Too often the bureau officers sided with the white landowners in these disagreements with former slaves.

Harper's Weekly, July 25, 1868.

These appeals moved Howard. He returned to Washington and attempted to persuade Congress to provide land. Congress refused, and President Johnson was determined that white people would get their lands back. It seemed so sensible to most white people. Property that had belonged to white families for generations simply could not be given to freedmen. Freedmen saw it differently. They deserved land that they and their families had worked without compensation for generations. Freedmen believed it was the only way to make freedom meaningful and to gain independence from white people. As it turned out, most freedmen were forced off land they thought should belong to them.

Southern Homestead Act

In early 1866 Congress attempted to provide land for freedmen with the passage of the **Southern Homestead Act**. More than three million acres of public land were set aside for black people and white southerners who had remained loyal to the Union. Much of this land, however, consisted of swampy wetlands or unfertile pinewoods unsuitable for farming. More than 4,000 black families—three-quarters of them in Florida—did claim some of this land, but many lacked the financial resources to cultivate it. Eventually timber companies acquired much of it, and the Southern Homestead Act largely failed.

Southern Homestead Act Congress passed this measure in 1866 that set aside over three million acres of land for former slaves and loyal white Southerners to farm following the Civil War. Most of the land was not fertile or suitable for agriculture, and the act largely failed.

Sharecropping

To make matters worse, by 1866 bureau officials tried to force freedmen to sign labor contracts with white landowners—returning black people to white authority. Black men

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VOICES A Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner Tells Freed People What Freedom Means

In June 1865 Charles Soule, the commissioner of contracts for the Freedmen's Bureau, told freedmen in Orangeburg, South Carolina, what to expect and how to behave in the coming year:

You are now free, but you must know that the only difference you can feel yet, between slavery and freedom, is that neither you nor your children can be bought or sold. You may have a harder time this year than you have ever had before; it will be the price you pay for your freedom. You will have to work hard, and get very little to eat, and very few clothes to wear. If you get through this year alive and well, you should be thankful. . . . You cannot be paid in money, for there is no good money in the District, nothing but Confederate paper. Then, what can you be paid with? Why, with food, with clothes, with the free use of your little houses and plots. You do not own a cent's worth except yourselves.

You do not understand why some of the white people who used to own you do not have to work in the field. It is because they are rich. If every man were poor, and worked in his own field, there would be no big farms, and very little cotton or corn raised to sell; there would be no money, and nothing to buy. Some people must be rich, to pay the others, and they have the right to do no work except to look out after their property.

Remember that all of your working time belongs to the man who hires you: therefore you must not leave work without his leave not even to nurse a child, or to go and visit a wife or husband. When you wish to go off the place, get a pass as you used to, and then you will run no danger of being taken up by our soldiers.

In short, do just about as the good men among you have always done. Remember that even if you are badly off, no one can buy and sell you: remember that if you help yourselves, GOD will help you, and trust hopefully that next year and the year after will bring some new blessing to you.

1. According to Soule, what is the difference between slavery and freedom?
2. Does freedom mean that freed people will have economic opportunities equal to those of white people?
3. How should freed people have responded to Soule's advice?

SOURCE: Ira Berlin et al., "The Terrain of Freedom: The Struggle over the Meaning of Free Labor in the U.S. South," *History Workshop* 22 (Autumn 1986): 108–30.

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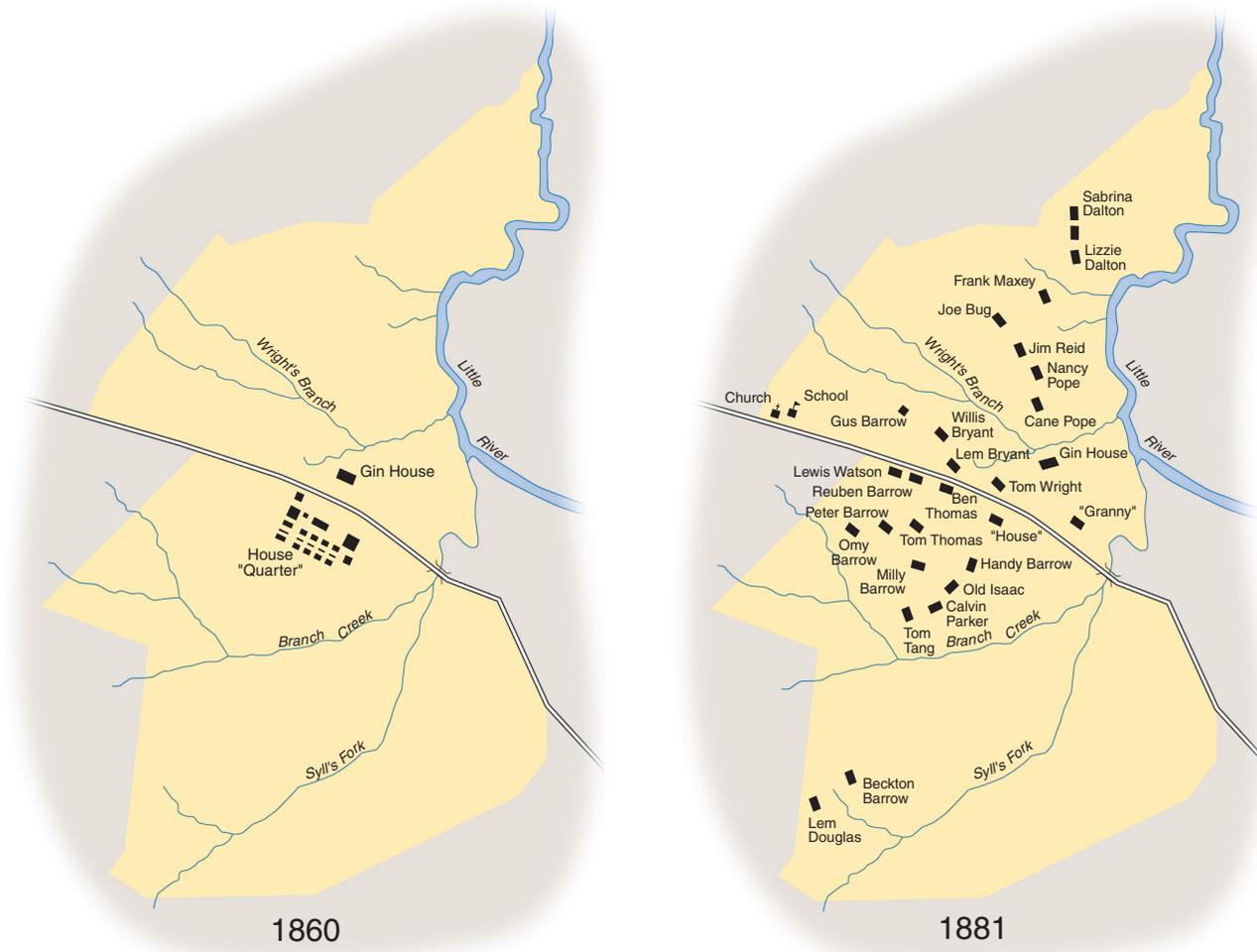
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sharecropping The system following the Civil War in which former slaves worked land owned by white people and "paid" for the use of the land and for tools, seeds, fertilizer, and mules by sharing the crop—usually cotton—with the owner.

who refused to sign contracts could be arrested. Theoretically, these contracts were legal agreements between two equals: landowner and laborer. But they were seldom freely concluded. Bureau agents usually sided with the landowner and pressured freedmen to accept unequal terms.

Occasionally, the landowner would pay wages to the laborer. But because most landowners lacked cash to pay wages, they typically agreed to provide the laborer with part of the crop. The laborer, often grudgingly, agreed to work under the supervision of the landowner. The contracts required labor for a full year, and the laborer could neither quit nor strike. Landowners demanded that the laborers work the fields in gangs. Freedmen, however, resisted this system. They sometimes insisted on making decisions involving planting, fertilizing, and harvesting as they sought to exercise independence (see Map 12-1).

Thus, it took time for a new form of agricultural labor to develop. But by the 1870s, the system of **sharecropping** dominated most of the South. There were no wages. Freedmen worked land as families—not in gangs—and not under direct white supervision. The landowner provided seed, tools, fertilizer, and work animals (mules, horses, oxen), and the black family received one-third of the crop. There were many variations on these arrangements, and black families were often cheated out of their fair share of the crop. Without land of their own, they remained under white authority well into the twentieth century.



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MAP 12-1 THE EFFECT OF SHARECROPPING ON THE SOUTHERN PLANTATION: THE BARROW PLANTATION, OGLETHORPE COUNTY, GEORGIA

With the end of slavery and the advent of sharecropping, black people would no longer agree to work in fields as gangs. They preferred to have each family cultivate separate plots of land, thereby distancing themselves as much as possible from slavery and white supervision.

Although many freed people worked the same land that they had as slaves, how does this map suggest the changes experienced by black people in family life, religion, education, and their relationships with white people?

The Black Church

12-4 What role did the black church play in African-American life in the post-war decades?

In the years after slavery, the church became the most important institution among African Americans other than the family. It filled deep spiritual needs, offered enriching music, provided charity and compassion to those in need, developed community and political leaders, and was free of white supervision. Before slavery's demise, free black people and slaves often attended white churches where they participated in religious

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Freedwomen washing laundry.

services conducted by white clergymen and where they were treated as second-class Christians.

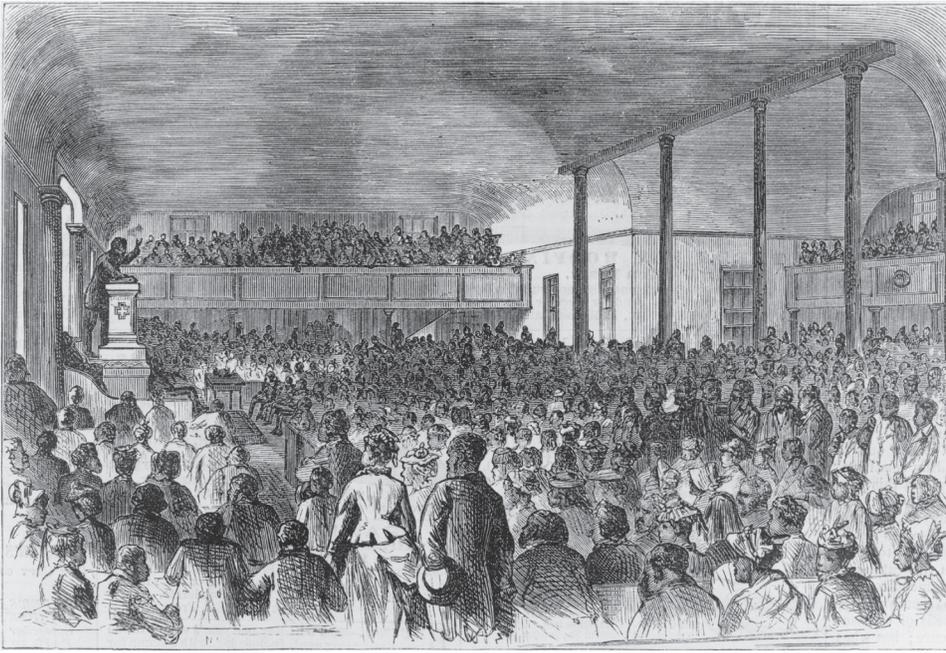
Once liberated, black men and women organized their own churches with their own ministers. Most black people considered white ministers incapable of delivering a meaningful message. Nancy Williams recalled, “Ole white preachers used to talk wid dey tongues widdout sayin’ nothin’, but Jesus told us slaves to talk wid our hearts.”

Northern white missionaries were sometimes appalled by the unlettered and ungrammatical black preachers who nevertheless communicated effectively and emotionally with their parishioners. A visiting white clergyman was impressed and humbled on hearing a black preacher who lacked education but more than made up for it with his devout faith. “He talked about Christ and his salvation as one who understood what he said. . . . Here was an unlearned man, one who could not read, telling of the love of Christ, of Christian faith and duty in a way which I have not learned.”

Other black and white religious leaders anguished over what they considered moral laxity and displaced values among the freed people. They preached about honesty, thrift, temperance, and elimination of sexual promiscuity. They demanded an end to “rum-suckers, bar-room loafers, whiskey dealers and card players among the men, and to those women who dressed finely on ill gotten gain.”

Church members struggled, scrimped, and saved to buy land and build churches. Most former slaves founded Baptist and Methodist churches. These denominations tended to be more autonomous and less subject to outside control. Their doctrine was usually simple and direct without complex theology. Of the Methodist churches, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church made giant strides in the South after the Civil War.

In Charleston the AME Church was resurrected 40 years after it had been forced to disband during the turmoil over the Denmark Vesey plot in 1822 (see Chapter 8). But by the 1870s, three AME congregations were thriving in Charleston. In Wilmington, North Carolina, the 1,600 members of the Front Street Methodist Church decided to join the AME Church soon after the Civil War ended. They replaced the longtime white minister with a black man.



Hundreds of black churches were founded across the South following the Civil War, and they grew spectacularly in the decades that followed. This illustration shows a congregation crowded into Richmond's First African Baptist Church in 1874.

White Methodists initially encouraged cooperation with black Methodists and helped establish the Colored (now Christian) Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church. However, the white Methodists lost some of their fervor after they failed to persuade the black Methodists to keep political issues out of the CME Church and to dwell instead solely on spiritual concerns.

The Presbyterian, Congregational, and Episcopal churches appealed to the more prosperous members of the black community. Their services tended to be more formal and solemn. Black people who had been free before the Civil War were usually affiliated with these congregations and remained so after the conflict. Well-to-do free black people in Charleston organized St. Mark's Protestant Episcopal Church when they separated from the white Episcopal Church, but they retained their white minister Joseph Seabrook as rector. Poorer black people of darker complexion found churches like St. Mark's unappealing. Ed Barber visited, but only one time:

"When I was trampin' 'round Charleston, dere was a church dere called St. Mark, dat all de society folks of my color went to. No black nigger welcome dere, they told me. Thinkin' as how I was bright 'nough to git in, I up and goes dere one Sunday, Ah, how they did carry on, bow and scrape and ape de white folks. . . . I was uncomfortable all de time though, 'cause they were too 'hifalootin' in de ways, in de singin', and all sorts of carryin' ons."

The Roman Catholic Church made modest in-roads among black southerners. There were all-black parishes in St. Augustine, Savannah, Charleston, and Louisville after the Civil War. For generations before the conflict, many well-to-do free people of color in New Orleans had been Catholics, and their descendants remained faithful to the church. On Georgia's Skidaway Island, Benedictine monks established a school for black youngsters in 1878 that survived for nearly a decade.

Religious differences notwithstanding, the black churches, their parishioners, and their clergymen would play a vital role in Reconstruction politics. More than one hundred black ministers were elected to political office after the Civil War.

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Education

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Why was education so important to African Americans, and what were the ways in which they were able to obtain it?



Watch on MyHistoryLab Video:
The Schools that the Civil War and Reconstruction Created

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Freedom and education were inseparable. To remain illiterate after emancipation was to remain enslaved. One ex-slave master bluntly told his former slave, Charles Whiteside, “Charles, you is a free man they say, but Ah tells you now, you is still a slave and if you lives to be a hundred, you’ll STILL be a slave, cause you got no education, and education is what makes a man free!” Almost every freed black person—young or old—desperately wanted to learn. Elderly people were especially eager to read the Bible. During the war and before slavery ended, black people began to establish schools. In 1861 Mary Peake, a free black woman, opened a school in Hampton, Virginia. On South Carolina’s sea islands, a black cabinetmaker began teaching openly after having covertly operated a school for years. In 1862 northern missionaries arrived on the sea islands to begin teaching. Laura Towne and Ellen Murray, two white women, and Charlotte Forten, a black woman, opened Penn School on St. Helena’s Island as part of the Port Royal Experiment. They enrolled 138 children and 58 adults. By 1863 there were 1,700 students and 45 teachers at 30 schools in the South Carolina low country.

With the end of the Civil War, northern religious organizations, in cooperation with the Freedmen’s Bureau, organized hundreds of schools. Classes were held in stables, homes, former slave cabins, taverns, churches, and even—in Savannah and New Orleans—the old slave markets. Former slaves spent hours in the fields and then trudged to a makeshift school to learn the alphabet and arithmetic. In 1865 black ministers created the Savannah Educational Association, raised \$1,000, employed 15 black teachers, and enrolled 600 students.

In 1866 the Freedmen’s Bureau set aside \$500,000 for education. The Bureau furnished the buildings, while former slaves hired, housed, and fed the teachers. By 1869 the Freedmen’s Bureau was involved with 3,000 schools and 150,000 students. Even more impressive, by 1870 black people had contributed \$1 million to educate their people.



Read on MyHistoryLab Document: Charlotte Forten Describes Life on the Sea Islands, 1864



Charlotte Forten came from a prominent Philadelphia family of color. She joined hundreds of black and white teachers who migrated South during and after the Civil War to instruct the freed people. Some teachers remained for a few months. Others stayed for a lifetime. Charlotte Forten—shown here in an 1866 photograph—taught on the South Carolina sea islands from 1862 to 1864.

Black Teachers

Although freedmen appreciated the dedication of the white teachers affiliated with the missionary societies, they usually preferred black teachers. The Rev. Richard H. Cain, an AME minister who came south from Brooklyn, New York, said that black people needed to learn to control their own futures: “We must take into our own hands the education of our race. . . . Honest, dignified whites may teach ever so well, but it has not the effect to exalt the black man’s opinion of his own race, because they have always been in the habit of seeing white men in honored positions, and respected.”

Black men and women responded to the call to teach. Virginia C. Green, a northern black woman, felt compelled to go to Mississippi: “Though I have never known servitude they are . . . my people. Born as far north as the lakes I have felt no freer because so many were less fortunate. . . . I look forward with impatience to the time when my people shall be strong, blest with education, purified and made prosperous by virtue and industry.” Hezekiah Hunter, a black teacher from New York, commented in 1865 on the need for black teachers: “I believe we best can instruct our own people, knowing our own peculiarities—needs—necessities. Further—I believe we that are competent owe it to our people to teach them our speciality.” And in Malden, West Virginia, when black residents found that a recently arrived 18-year-old black man could read and write, they hired him to teach.

In some areas of the South, the sole person available to teach was a poorly educated former slave equipped primarily with a willingness to teach fellow freedmen. One such teacher explained, “I never had the chance of goen to school for I was a slave until freedom. . . . I am the only teacher because we can not doe better now.” Many northern teachers, black and white, provided more than the basics of elementary education. Black life and history were occasionally read about and discussed. Abolitionist Lydia Maria Child wrote *The Freedmen’s Book*, which offered brief biographies of Benjamin Banneker, Frederick Douglass, and Toussaint Louverture. More often northern teachers, dismayed at the backwardness of the freedmen, struggled to modify behavior and to impart cultural values by teaching piety, thrift, cleanliness, temperance, and timeliness.

Many former slaves came to resent some of these teachers as condescending, self-righteous, and paternalistic. Sometimes the teachers, especially those who were white, became frustrated with recalcitrant students who did not readily absorb middle-class values. Others, however, derived enormous satisfaction from teaching freedmen. A Virginia teacher commented, “I think I shall stay here as long as I live and teach this people. I have no love or taste for any other work, and I am happy only here with them.”

Black Colleges

Northern churches and religious societies established dozens of colleges, universities, academies, and institutes across the South in the late 1860s and the 1870s. Most of these institutions provided elementary and secondary education. Few black students were prepared for actual college or university work. The **American Missionary Association**—an abolitionist and Congregationalist organization—worked with the Freedmen’s Bureau to establish Fisk in Tennessee, Hampton in Virginia, Tougaloo in Alabama, and Avery in South Carolina. The primary purpose of these schools was to educate black students to become teachers.

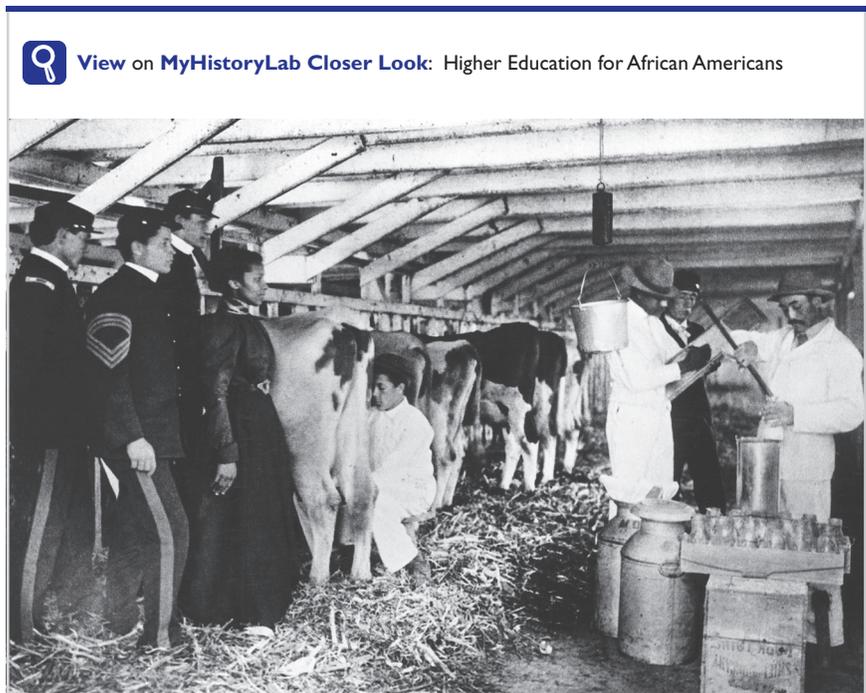
In Missouri, the black enlisted men and white officers of the 62nd and 65th Colored Volunteers raised \$6,000 to establish Lincoln Institute in 1866, which would become Lincoln University. The American Baptist Home Mission Society founded Virginia Union, Shaw in North Carolina, Benedict in South Carolina, and Morehouse in Georgia. Northern Methodists helped establish Claflin in South Carolina, Rust in Mississippi, and Bennett in North Carolina. The Episcopalians were responsible for St. Augustine’s in North Carolina and St. Paul’s in Virginia. These and similar institutions formed the foundation for the historically black colleges and universities.

Response of White Southerners

White southerners considered black people’s efforts to learn absurd. For generations, white Americans had considered people of African descent abjectly inferior. When efforts were made to educate former slaves, white southerners reacted with suspicion, contempt, and hostility. One white woman told a teacher, “I do assure you, you might as well try to teach your horse or mule to read, as to teach these niggers. They can’t learn.”

Most white people were well aware that black people could learn. Otherwise, the slave codes that prohibited educating slaves would have been unnecessary. After slavery’s end, some white people went out of their way to prevent black people from learning. Countless schools were burned, mostly in rural

American Missionary Association This religious organization sent teachers and clergymen throughout the South following the Civil War to tend to the spiritual and educational needs of former slaves. It was instrumental in establishing dozens of schools, including Fisk, Hampton, and Avery.



Black and white land-grant colleges stressed training in agriculture and industry. In this late nineteenth-century photograph, Hampton Institute students learn milk production. The men are in military uniforms, which was typical for males at these colleges. Military training was a required part of the curriculum.

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areas. In Canton, Mississippi, black people collected money to open a school—only to have white residents inform them that the school would be burned and the prospective teacher lynched if it opened. The female teacher at a freedmen’s school in Donaldsonville, Louisiana, was shot and killed.

Other white southerners grudgingly tolerated black people’s desire to acquire an education. One planter conceded in 1870, “Every little negro in the county is now going to school and the public pays for it. This is one hell of [a] fix but we can’t help it, and the best policy is to conform as far as possible to circumstances.”

Most white people refused to attend school with black people. No integrated schools were established in the immediate aftermath of emancipation. Most black people were more interested in gaining an education than in whether white students attended school with them. When black youngsters tried to attend a white school in Raleigh, North Carolina, the white students stopped going to it. For a brief time in Charleston, black and white children attended the same school, but they were taught in separate classrooms.

Violence

12-6 Describe the violence directed at southern black people in the aftermath of the war.

In the days, weeks, and months after the end of the Civil War, an orgy of brutality and violence swept across the South. White southerners—embittered by their defeat and unable to adjust to the end of slave labor and the loss of millions of dollars worth of slave property—lashed out at black people. There were beatings, murders, rapes, and riots, often with little or no provocation.

Black people who demanded respect, wore better clothing, refused to step aside for white people, or asked to be addressed as “mister” or “missus” were attacked. In South Carolina, a white clergyman shot and killed a black man who protested when another black man was removed from a church service. In Texas, one black man was killed for not removing his hat in the presence of a white man and another for refusing to relinquish a bottle of whiskey. A black woman was beaten for “using insolent language,” and a black worker in Alabama was killed for speaking sharply to a white overseer. In Virginia, a black veteran was beaten after announcing he had been proud to serve in the Union Army.

In South Carolina, a white man asked a passing black man whom he belonged to. The black man replied that he no longer belonged to anybody, “I am free now.” With that, the white man roared, “Sas me? You black devil!” He then slashed the freedman with a knife. The sheriff of DeWitt County, Texas, shot a black man who was whistling “Yankee Doodle.” A Freedmen’s Bureau agent in North Carolina explained the intense white hostility: “The fact is, it’s the first notion with a great many of these people, if a Negro says anything or does anything that they don’t like, to take a gun and put a bullet into him, or a charge of shot.” In Texas another Freedmen’s Bureau officer claimed that white people simply killed black people “for the love of killing.”

There was also large-scale violence. In 1865 University of North Carolina students twice attacked peaceful meetings of black people. Near Pine Bluff, Arkansas, in 1866, a white mob burned a black settlement and lynched 24 men, women, and children. An estimated 2,000 black people were murdered around Shreveport, Louisiana. In Texas, white people killed 1,000 black people between 1865 and 1868.

In May 1866 white residents of Memphis went on a rampage after black veterans forced police to release a black prisoner. The city was already beset with economic difficulties and racial tensions caused in part by an influx of rural refugees. White people, led by Irish policemen, destroyed hundreds of homes, cabins, shacks, churches, and schools in the black section of Memphis. Altogether, 46 black people and two white men died.

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Watch on MyHistoryLab Video:
Reconstruction in Texas

PROFILE Charlotte E. Ray

CHARLOTTE E. RAY became the first African-American woman to earn a law degree and the first woman admitted to practice law in Washington, DC. She was born on January 13, 1850, in New York City, one of seven children. Her parents were the Rev. Charles B. Ray and his second wife, Charlotte Augusta Burroughs Ray. They were firm believers in the rights of African Americans and in their potential for success.

Charlotte attended Myrtilla Miner's Institution for the Education of Colored Youth in Washington, DC, where Myrtilla Miner, a white educator from New York, was determined to demonstrate that black women were as capable of high moral and mental development as white women.

Charlotte completed high school at Miner's in 1869 and taught at the Normal and Preparatory Department of the recently established Howard University. She also enrolled in law classes at Howard and wrote a thesis analyzing corporations.

She graduated from the law school in 1872 and a month later was admitted to the bar in Washington. She opened an office and planned to practice real estate law. As a real estate lawyer, she could avoid court appearances and the discrimination that women attorneys encountered. She often used her initials, C. E. Ray, so that her clients would not suffer because their legal counsel could be identified as a woman.

Because of the Panic of 1873 and the ensuing economic depression, as well as the difficulties of being a black woman in a white male profession, Ray gave up the practice of law. She supported women's rights and, in 1876, attended the annual meeting of the National American Woman Suffrage Association in New York City. By 1879, she had returned to New York and taught school in Brooklyn. Some time before 1886, she had married, but little is known of her husband. Charlotte Ray died of acute bronchitis on January 11, 1911.

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On July 30, 1866, in New Orleans, white people—angered that black men were demanding political rights—assaulted black people on the street and in a convention hall. City policemen, who were mostly Confederate veterans, shot down the black delegates as they fled in panic waving white flags in a futile attempt to surrender. In the assault, 34 black people and three of their white allies died. Federal troops eventually stopped the bloodshed. General Philip H. Sheridan called the riot “an absolute massacre.”

Little was done to stem the violence. Most Union troops had been withdrawn from the South and demobilized after the war. The Freedmen's Bureau was usually unwilling and unable to protect the black population. Black people left to defend themselves were usually in no position to retaliate. Instead, they sometimes attempted to bring the perpetrators to justice. In Orangeburg, South Carolina, armed black men brought three white men who had been wreaking violence in the community to the local jail. In Holly Springs, Mississippi, a posse of armed black men apprehended a white man who had murdered a freedwoman.

For black people, the system of justice was thoroughly unjust. Although black people could now testify against white people in court, southern juries remained all white and refused to convict white people charged with harming black people. In Texas during 1865 and 1866, 500 white men were indicted for murdering black people. None were convicted.

The Crusade for Political and Civil Rights

In October 1864 in Syracuse, New York, 145 black leaders gathered in a national convention. Some of the century's most prominent black men and women attended, including Henry Highland Garnet, Frances E. W. Harper, William Wells Brown, Francis L. Cardozo, Richard H. Cain, Jonathan J. Wright, and Jonathan C. Gibbs. They embraced the basic tenets of the American political tradition and proclaimed that they expected to participate fully in it.

Anticipating a future free of slavery, Frederick Douglass optimistically declared “that we hereby assert our full confidence in the fundamental principles of this government . . . the great heart of this nation will ultimately concede us our just claims, accord us our rights, and grant us our full measure of citizenship under the broad shield of the Constitution.”

Even before the **Syracuse Convention**, northern Republicans met in Union-controlled territory around Beaufort, South Carolina, and nominated the state's delegates to the 1864

Syracuse Convention A meeting of black leaders in Syracuse, New York, to discuss the future of African Americans following the abolition of slavery. They insisted that black people had earned and deserved the same political and legal rights as white Americans.

Republican national convention. Among those selected were Robert Smalls and Prince Rivers, former slaves who had exemplary records with the Union Army. The probability of black participation in postwar politics seemed promising.

But northern and southern white leaders who already held power would largely determine whether black Americans would gain political power or acquire the same rights as white people. As the Civil War ended, President Lincoln was more concerned with restoring the seceded states to the Union than in opening political doors for black people. Yet Lincoln suggested that at least some black men deserved the right to vote. On April 11, 1865, he wrote, “I would myself prefer that [the vote] were now conferred on the very intelligent, and on those who serve our cause as soldiers.” Three days later he was assassinated.

Presidential Reconstruction under Andrew Johnson

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What were the main elements of the separate Reconstruction programs offered by President Johnson and the Radical Republicans in Congress, as well as the South’s reaction to these plans?

Vice President Andrew Johnson became president following Lincoln’s assassination and initially seemed inclined to impose stern policies on the white South while befriend- ing the freedmen. He announced that “treason must be made odious, and traitors must be punished and impoverished.” In 1864 he had told black people, “I will be your Moses, and lead you through the Red Sea of War and Bondage to a fairer future of Liberty and Peace.” Nothing proved to be further from the truth. Andrew Johnson was no friend of black Americans.

Born poor in eastern Tennessee and never part of the southern aristocracy, Johnson opposed secession and was the only senator from the seceded states to remain loyal to the Union. He had nonetheless acquired five slaves and the conviction that black people were so inferior that white men must forever govern them. In 1867 Johnson argued that black people could not exercise political power and that they had “less capacity for government than any other race of people. No independent government of any form has ever been successful in their hands. On the contrary, wherever they have been left to their own devices they have shown a constant tendency to relapse into barbarism.”

Johnson quickly lost his enthusiasm for punishing traitors. Indeed, he began to placate white southerners. In May 1865 Johnson granted blanket amnesty and pardons to former Confederates willing to swear allegiance to the United States. The main exceptions were high former Confederate officials and those who owned property valued in excess of \$20,000, a large sum at the time. Yet even these leaders could appeal for individual pardons. And appeal they did. By 1866 Johnson had pardoned more than 7,000 high-ranking former Confederates and wealthier southerners. Moreover, he had restored land to those white people who had lost it to freedmen.

Johnson’s actions encouraged those who had supported secession, owned slaves, and opposed the Union. He permitted longtime southern leaders to regain political influence and authority only months after the end of America’s bloodiest conflict. As black people and Radical Republicans watched in disbelief, Johnson appointed provisional governors in the former Confederate states. Leaders in those states then called constitutional conventions, held elections, and prepared to regain their place in the Union. Johnson merely insisted that each former Confederate state formally accept the **Thirteenth Amendment** (ratified in December 1865, it outlawed slavery) and repudiate Confederate war debts.

The southern constitutional conventions excluded black people from the political system and denied them equal rights. As one Mississippi delegate explained, “’Tis nature’s law that the superior race must rule and rule they will.”

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Watch on MyHistoryLab Video:
Presidential Reconstruction

Thirteenth Amendment This amendment to the U.S. Constitution outlawed slavery and involuntary servitude.

VOICES A Northern Black Woman on Teaching Freedmen

Blanche Virginia Harris was born in 1842 in Monroe, Michigan, and graduated from Oberlin College in 1860. She became the principal of a black school in Norfolk, Virginia, attended by 230 students. She organized night classes for adults and a sewing society to provide clothing for impoverished students. Later, she taught in Mississippi, North Carolina, and Tennessee. In the following letter she describes her experiences in Mississippi:

23 January 1866

Natchez, Miss.

I have been in this city now nearly five months. . . . The colored teachers three in number, sent out by the [American Missionary] Association to this city, have been brought down here it is true. And then left to the mercy of the colored people or themselves. The distinction between the two classes of teachers (white and colored) is so marked that it is the topic of conversation among the better class of colored people.

My school is very large, some of them pay and some do not. And from the proceeds I pay the board of my sister and myself, and also for the rent of two rooms; rent as well as

board is very high so I have to work quite hard to meet my expenses. I also furnish lights, wood and coal. I do not write this as fault-finding, far from it. I shall be thankful if I can in any way help. I sometimes get discouraged. . . .

I have become very much attached to my school; the interest they manifest in their studies pleases me. I will now tell you how I employ my time. From 8 A.M. until 2 P.M. I teach the children. At 3 P.M. I have a class of adults and at night I have night school.

One afternoon we have prayer meeting, another sewing school. And another singing school. I hope my next letter may be more interesting to you.

Very Respectfully,
Blanche Harris

1. Why was the race of the teacher of such concern?
2. What did Harris find difficult about teaching, and what did she find rewarding?

SOURCE: Ellen NicKenzie Lawson, ed., *The Three Sarahs: Documents of Antebellum Black College Women* (New York: Edward Mellon Press, 1984).

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Black Codes

After the election of state and local officials, white legislators gathered in state capitals across the South to determine the status and future of the freedmen. With little debate, the legislatures drafted the so-called **black codes**. Southern politicians gave no thought to providing black people with the political and legal rights associated with citizenship.

The black codes sought to ensure the availability of a subservient agricultural labor supply controlled by white people. They imposed severe restrictions on freedmen, who had to sign annual labor contracts with white landowners. In addition, South Carolina required black people who wanted to establish a business to purchase licenses costing from \$10 to \$100. The codes permitted black children ages 2 to 21 to be apprenticed to white people and spelled out their duties and obligations in detail. Corporal punishment was legal. Employers were designated “masters” and employees “servants.” The black codes also restricted black people from loitering or vagrancy, using alcohol or firearms, hunting, fishing, and grazing livestock. However, the codes did guarantee rights that slaves had not possessed. Freedmen could marry legally, engage in contracts, purchase property, sue or be sued, and testify in court. But black people could not vote or serve on juries. The black codes conceded—barely—freedom to black people.

Black Conventions

Alarmed by these threats to their freedom, black people met in conventions across the South in 1865 and 1866 to protest, appeal for justice, and chart their future. Men who had been free before the war dominated the conventions. Many were ministers, teachers, and artisans. Few had been slaves. Women and children also attended—as spectators, not delegates—but

black codes Laws that were passed in each of the former Confederate states following the Civil War that applied only to black people. While conceding such rights as the right to marry, to contract a debt, or to own property, the codes severely restricted the rights and opportunities of former slaves in terms of labor and mobility.

women were often influential as they offered comments, suggestions, and criticism. These meetings were hardly militant or radical affairs. Delegates respectfully insisted that white people live up to the principles and rights embodied in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

At the AME church in Raleigh, North Carolina, delegates asked for equal rights and the right to vote. At Georgia's convention, they protested against white violence and appealed for leaders who would enforce the law without regard to color: "We ask not for a Black Man's Governor, nor a White Man's Governor, but for a People's Governor, who shall impartially protect the rights of all, and faithfully sustain the Union."

Delegates at the Norfolk meeting reminded white Virginians that black people were patriotic: "We are Americans. We know no other country. We love the land of our birth." But they protested that Virginia's black code caused "invidious political or legal distinctions, on account of color merely." They requested the right to vote and added that they might boycott the businesses of "those who deny to us our equal rights."

Two conventions were held in Charleston, South Carolina—one before and one after the black code was enacted. At the first, delegates stressed the "respect and affection" they felt toward white Charlestonians. They even proposed that only literate men be granted the right to vote if it were applied to both races. The second convention denounced the black code and insisted on its repeal. Delegates again asked for the rights to vote and testify in court: "These two things we deem necessary to our welfare and elevation." They also appealed for public schools and for "homesteads for ourselves and our children." White authorities ignored the black conventions and their petitions. Instead, they were confident they had relegated the freedmen to a subordinate role.

By late 1865 President Johnson's Reconstruction policies had aroused black people. One black Union veteran summed up the situation: "If you call this Freedom, what do you call Slavery?" Republicans in Congress also opposed Johnson's policies toward the freedmen and the former Confederate states.

The Radical Republicans

Radical Republicans, as the more militant Republicans were called, were especially disturbed that Johnson seemed to have abandoned the ex-slaves to their former masters. They considered white southerners disloyal and unrepentant, despite their military defeat. Moreover, Radical Republicans—unlike moderate Republicans and Democrats—were determined to transform the racial fabric of American society by including black people in the political and economic system.

Among the most influential Radical Republicans were Senators Charles Sumner, Benjamin Wade, and Henry Wilson, as well as Congressmen Thaddeus Stevens, George W. Julian, and James M. Ashley. Few white Americans were as dedicated to the rights of black people as these men. They had fought to abolish slavery and were reluctant to compromise. They were honest, tough, and articulate but also abrasive, difficult, self-righteous, and vain. Black people appreciated them, whereas many white people hated them. One black veteran wrote to Charles Sumner in 1869, stating, "Your name shall live in our hearts forever." A white Philadelphia businessman said that Thaddeus Stevens "seems to oppose any measure that will not benefit the nigger."

Radical Proposals

To provide freedmen with land, Stevens introduced a bill in Congress in late 1865 to confiscate 400 million acres from the wealthiest 10 percent of southerners and distribute it free to freedmen. The remaining land would be auctioned off in plots no larger than 500 acres. Few legislators supported the proposal. Even those who wanted fundamental change considered confiscation a violation of property rights.

Instead, Radical Republicans supported voting rights for black men. They were convinced that black men—to protect themselves and to secure the South for the Republican Party—had to have the right to vote.

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Radical Republicans Members of the Republican Party during Reconstruction who vigorously supported the rights of African Americans to vote, hold political office, and have the same legal and economic opportunities as white people.

PROFILE

Aaron A. Bradley

AT A TIME WHEN MANY WHITE PEOPLE considered it a disgrace that even the most reserved, refined, and well-educated black man might serve in political office, Aaron Bradley's presence in politics was outrageous. White southerners regarded him as a dangerous revolutionary. White Republicans, who normally would have been his allies, considered him belligerent and uncooperative. But most freedmen admired and supported him. Like him or not, he was a major figure in Georgia politics during Reconstruction.

Bradley was born a slave in about 1815 in South Carolina. His father was probably white. He belonged to Francis W. Pickens, who was South Carolina's governor when the state seceded (see Chapter 10). For a time, Bradley worked as a shoemaker in nearby Augusta, Georgia. At about age 20, he escaped and went to Boston, where he studied law and met black and white abolitionists.

In 1865 Bradley moved to Savannah, where he took up the cause of the freedmen and opened a school. He worked closely with the city's black longshoremen and low country and sea island rice field workers.

Bradley demanded that black families keep the land they had occupied under Sherman's Special Field Order #15. He believed that they had to have land to prosper. He criticized the Freedmen's Bureau for attempting to force black people off the land and argued that President Johnson should be impeached for supporting Confederate landowners rather than black and white people who were loyal to the Union.

Bradley also insisted that black people deserved the rights to vote, testify in court, and have jury trials. After he urged black farmers to defend their land by force, federal authorities charged him with advocating insurrection. He was sentenced to a year's confinement but was soon paroled. Almost immediately, another fiery speech got him in trouble again, and he had to leave Georgia.

He returned to Boston and renewed his pleas for land for the freedmen. He wrote the head of the Freedmen's Bureau, "My great object is, to give you Back-bone, and as the Chief Justice of 4 millions of Colored people, and Refugees; You can not, and must not, be a Military Tool, in the hands of Andrew Johnson."

In 1867 Bradley returned to Savannah and attacked the system of sharecropping. He complained that freedmen were compelled to work involuntarily and asked that black men be permitted to arm themselves. He also argued that justice would be fairer if the courts included black men. Although the Freedmen's Bureau considered Bradley a troublemaker, he never backed down.

In 1867, black voters elected Bradley to the state constitutional convention, but he was soon expelled. Then he was elected to the state senate—only to be expelled again along with all the black members of the Georgia legislature.

Meanwhile, Bradley carried on a running battle with Savannah's mayor, a former Confederate colonel affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan. He threatened the "KKK and all Bad Men, . . . if you strike a blow the man or men will be followed, and the house in which he or they shall take shelter, will be burned to the ground."

In 1868 Bradley organized black workers to arm themselves to retain the lands that they believed belonged to them. For a month, black men controlled parts of Chatham County outside Savannah. Eventually, federal authorities jailed one hundred of them. Bradley again fled north.

He returned to Georgia in 1870 and reclaimed his senate seat after Congress forced the legislature to seat its black members. He supported measures to remove Savannah's mayor, reduce taxes on workers, and institute an eight-hour workday.

Democrats regained control of Georgia politics in 1872, and Bradley and the Republicans were swept from power. He ran for Congress in South Carolina in 1874 but lost. He supported black migration to Liberia and Florida, but he moved to St. Louis and died there in 1881.

Aaron Bradley was certainly not a typical Reconstruction leader. He maintained few close ties to black or white politicians. He was constantly embroiled in disputes, he did not cooperate with middle-class black leaders, and had no ties with local churches and their clergymen—a rarity among black politicians.

He dressed in expensive and flashy clothes, and he could be pompous, abrasive, and intemperate. White people universally detested him. Yet Bradley remained popular among freedmen.

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Moderate Republicans, however, found the prospect of black voting almost as objectionable as the confiscation of land. They preferred to build the Republican Party in the South by cooperating with President Johnson and attracting loyal white southerners.

The thought of black suffrage appalled northern and southern Democrats. Most white northerners—Republicans and Democrats—favored denying black men the right to vote in

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Read on MyHistoryLab Document: The Colored People of South Carolina Protest the "Black Codes," 1865



Bearing a remarkable resemblance to a slave auction, this scene in Monticello, Florida, shows a black man auctioned off to the highest bidder shortly after the Civil War. Under the terms of most southern black codes, black people arrested and fined for vagrancy or loitering could be "sold" if they could not pay the fine. Such spectacles infuriated many northerners and led to demands for more rigid Reconstruction policies.

their states. After the war, proposals to guarantee the right to vote to black men were defeated in New York, Ohio, Kansas, and the Nebraska Territory. In the District of Columbia, a vote to permit black suffrage lost 6,951 to 35. However, five of the six New England states as well as Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin allowed black men to vote.

As much as they objected to black suffrage, most white northerners objected even more strongly to defiant white southerners. Journalist Charles A. Dana described the attitude of many northerners: "As for negro suffrage, the mass of Union men in the Northwest do not care a great deal. What scares them is the idea that the rebels are all to be let back . . . and made a power in government again, just as though there had been no rebellion."

In December 1865 Congress created the Joint Committee on Reconstruction to determine whether to readmit the southern states to the Union. The committee confirmed reports of widespread mistreatment of black people and white arrogance.

Read on MyHistoryLab Document: The Civil Rights Act of 1866

Civil Rights Act This act nullified the black codes and made African Americans citizens with the basic rights of life, liberty, and due process. It was passed over President Andrew Johnson's veto. Its main features were subsequently embedded in the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution.

The Freedmen's Bureau Bill and the Civil Rights Bill

In early 1866 Senator Lyman Trumbull, a moderate Republican from Illinois, introduced two major bills. The first was to provide more financial support for the Freedmen's Bureau and extend its authority to defend the rights of black people.

The second proposal became the first **Civil Rights Act** in American history. It made any person born in the United States a citizen (except Indians) and entitled them to rights protected by the U.S. government. Black people would possess the same legal rights as white people. The bill was clearly intended to invalidate the black codes.

Johnson's Vetoes

Both measures passed in Congress with nearly unanimous Republican support. President Johnson, however, vetoed them. He claimed that the bill to continue the Freedmen's Bureau would greatly expand the federal bureaucracy and permit too "vast a number of agents" to exercise arbitrary power over the white population. He insisted that the Civil Rights Bill benefited black people at the expense of white people: "In fact, the distinction of race and color is by the bill made to operate in favor of the colored and against the white race."

The Johnson vetoes stunned Republicans. Although he had not meant to, Johnson drove moderate Republicans into the radical camp and strengthened the Republican Party. The president did not believe Republicans would oppose him to support the freedmen. He was wrong. Congress overrode both vetoes. The Republicans broke with Johnson in 1866, defied him in 1867, and impeached him in 1868 (failing to remove him from office by only one vote in the Senate).

The Fourteenth Amendment

To secure the legal rights of freedmen, Republicans passed the **Fourteenth Amendment**. This amendment fundamentally changed the Constitution by compelling states to accept their residents as citizens and to guarantee that their rights as citizens would be safeguarded.

Its first section guaranteed citizenship to every person born in the United States. This included virtually every black person. In addition, it made each person a citizen of the state in which he or she resided, defined the specific rights of citizens, and protected those rights against the authority of state governments. Citizens had the right to due process (usually a trial) before they could lose their life, liberty, or property:

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Eleven years after Chief Justice Roger Taney declared in the *Dred Scott* decision that black people were "a subordinate and inferior class of beings" who had "no rights that white people were bound to respect," the Fourteenth Amendment vested African Americans with the same rights of citizenship other Americans possessed.

The amendment also threatened to deprive states of representation in Congress if they denied black men the vote. The end of slavery had also made obsolete the Three-Fifths Clause in the Constitution, which had counted slaves as only three-fifths (or 60 percent) of

 [Read on MyHistoryLab Document:](#) President Johnson Vetoes the Civil Rights Act of 1866

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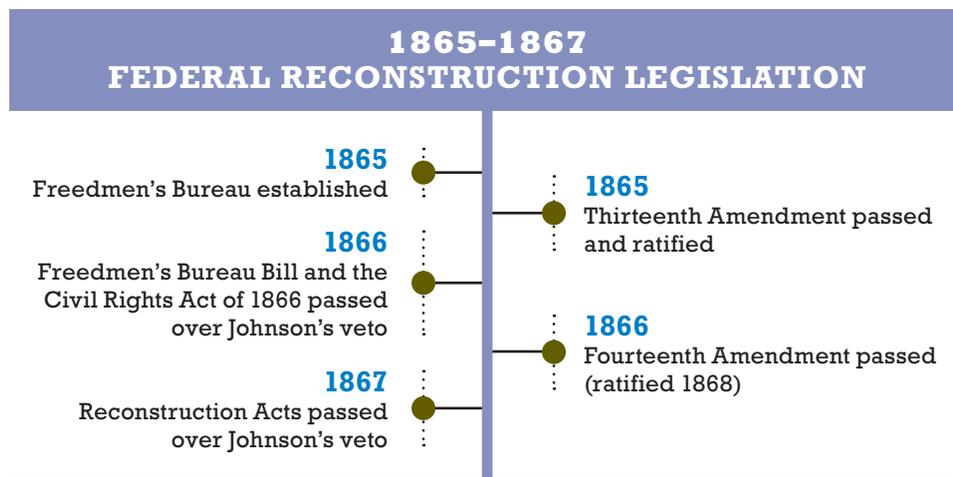
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Fourteenth Amendment This amendment ratified during Reconstruction made any person born in the United States a citizen of the United States and of the state in which he or she lived.

 [Read on MyHistoryLab Document:](#) The Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, 1865



Reconstruction The 12 years (1865–1877) following the Civil War, during which the former Confederate states were restored to the Union and former slaves became citizens and gained the right to vote and hold political office. It was also a time of violence and terrorism as many southern white people resisted the change in the status of African Americans.

Reconstruction Acts Led by Radical Republicans, Congress divided the South into five military districts. Each former Confederate state (except Tennessee) was to frame a new state constitution and establish a new state government. The first Reconstruction Act provided for universal manhood suffrage, which granted the right to vote to all adult males, including black men.

a white person in calculating a state's population and in determining the number of representatives each state was entitled to in the House of Representatives. Republicans feared that southern states would count black people in their populations without permitting them to vote, thereby gaining more representatives than those states had before the Civil War. The amendment mandated that if any state—northern or southern—did not allow adult male citizens to vote, then the number of representatives it was entitled to in Congress would be reduced in proportion to the number of men denied the right to vote.

Democrats almost unanimously opposed the Fourteenth Amendment. Andrew Johnson denounced it, although he could not prevent its adoption. Except for Tennessee, southern states refused to ratify it. Women's suffragists felt betrayed because the amendment limited suffrage to males. Despite this opposition, the amendment was ratified in 1868.

Radical Reconstruction

By 1867 Radical Republicans in Congress had wrested control over **Reconstruction** from Johnson, and they then imposed policies that brought black men into the political system as voters and officeholders. It was a dramatic development, second in importance only to emancipation and the end of slavery.

Republicans swept the 1866 congressional elections despite the belligerent opposition of Johnson and the Democrats. With two-thirds majorities in the House and Senate, Republicans easily overrode presidential vetoes. Two years after the Civil War, Republicans

dismantled the state governments established in the South under Johnson's authority and instituted a new Reconstruction policy.

Republicans passed the first of three **Reconstruction Acts** over Johnson's veto in March 1867. It divided the South into five military districts, each under the command of a general (see Map 12–2). Troops would protect lives and property while new civilian governments were formed. Elected delegates in each state would draft a new constitution and submit it to the voters.

Universal Manhood Suffrage

The Reconstruction Act stipulated that all adult males in the states of the former Confederacy were eligible to vote, except for those who had actively supported the Confederacy or were convicted felons. Once each state had formed a new government and approved the Fourteenth Amendment, it would be readmitted to the Union with representation in Congress.

The advent of Radical Reconstruction was the culmination of the struggle of black people to gain legal and political rights. Since the 1864 black national convention in Syracuse and the meetings and conventions in the South in 1865 and 1866, black leaders had argued that one of the consequences of the Civil War should be the inclusion of black men in the body politic. The achievement of that goal was due to their persistent and persuasive efforts, the determination of Radical Republicans, and, ironically, the obstructionism of Andrew Johnson, who had played into their hands.

Black Politics

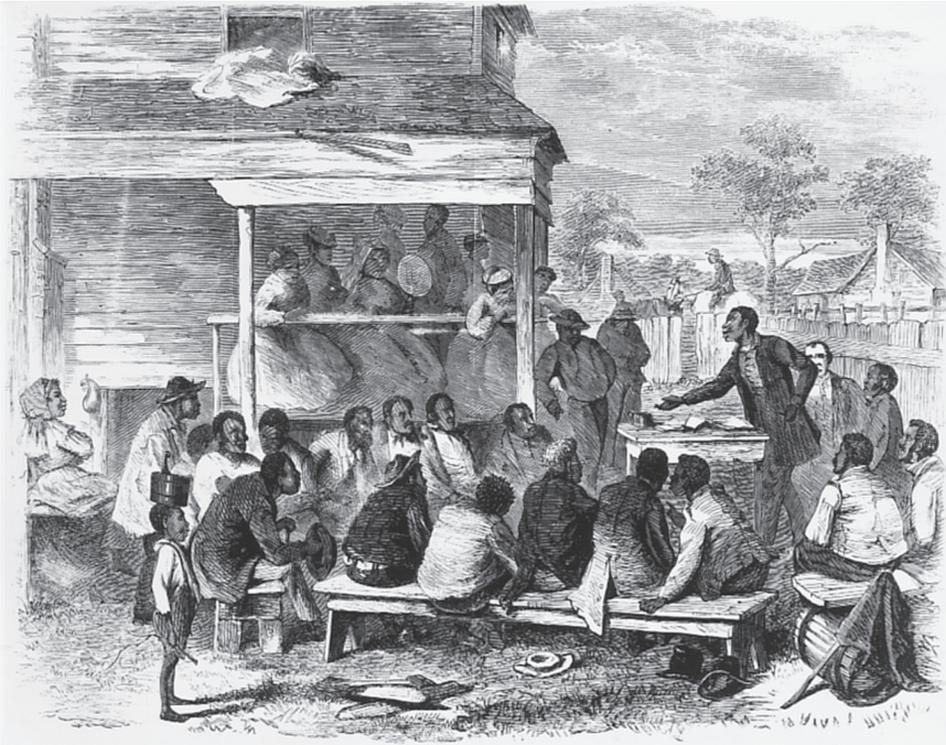
Full of energy and enthusiasm, black men and women rushed into the political arena in the spring and summer of 1867. Although women could not vote, they joined men at the meetings, rallies, parades, and picnics that accompanied political organizing in the



MAP 12–2 CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

Under the terms of the First Reconstruction Act of 1867, the former Confederate states (except Tennessee) were divided into five military districts and placed under the authority of military officers. Commanders in each of the five districts were responsible for supervising the reestablishment of civilian governments in each state.

In which states were African Americans a majority of delegates to that state's constitutional convention?



With the adoption of Radical Republican policies, most black men eagerly took part in political activities. Political meetings, conventions, speeches, barbecues, and other gatherings also attracted women and children.

South. For many freed men and women, politics became as important as religious activities. Black people flocked to the Republican Party and the new Union Leagues.

The **Union Leagues** had been established in the North during the Civil War, but they expanded across the South as quasi-political organizations in the late 1860s. The Leagues were social, fraternal, and patriotic groups in which black people often but not always outnumbered white people. League meetings featured ceremonies, rituals, initiation rites, and oaths. They gave people an opportunity to sharpen leadership skills and gain a political education by discussing issues from taxes to schools.

Sit-Ins and Strikes

Political progress did not induce apathy, satisfaction, or contentment among black people. Instead, gaining citizenship, legal rights, and the vote generated more expectations and demands for advancement. For example, black people insisted on equal access to public transportation. In Charleston, South Carolina, black people were permitted to ride only on the outside running boards of the horse- and mule-drawn streetcars. After a Republican rally there in April 1867, black men staged a “sit-in” on one of the vehicles before they were arrested. They wanted to sit on the seats inside. Within a month, after military authorities intervened, the streetcar company gave in. Similar protests occurred in Richmond and New Orleans.

Black workers also struck across the South in 1867. Black longshoremen in New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, Charleston, and Richmond walked off the job. Black laborers were usually paid less than white men for the same work, which led to labor unrest during the 1860s and 1870s. Sometimes the strikers won, sometimes they lost. In 1869 a black Baltimore longshoreman, Isaac Myers, organized the National Colored Labor Union.

Union League A social and fraternal organization that stirred political interest and support among black and white Republicans in the South during Reconstruction.

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The Reaction of White Southerners

White southerners grimly opposed Radical Reconstruction. They were outraged that black people could claim the same legal and political rights they themselves possessed. Such a possibility seemed preposterous to people convinced of the absolute inferiority of black people. Benjamin F. Perry, whom Johnson had appointed provisional governor of South Carolina in 1865, captures the depth of this racist conviction: “The African,” Perry declared, “has been in all ages, a savage or a slave. God created him inferior to the white man in form, color and intellect, and no legislation or culture can make him his equal. . . . His hair, his form and features will not compete with the caucasian race, and it is in vain to think of elevating him to the dignity of the white man. God created differences between the two races, and nothing can make him equal.”

Some white people, taking solace in their belief in the innate inferiority of black people, concluded they could turn black suffrage to their advantage. White people, they assumed, should easily be able to control and manipulate black voters just as they had controlled black people during slavery. White southerners who believed this, however, would be disappointed, and their disappointment would turn to fury.

CONCLUSION

Why were black southerners able to gain citizenship and access to the political system by 1868? Most white Americans did not suddenly abandon 250 years of deeply ingrained beliefs that people of African descent were their inferiors. The advances that African Americans achieved fit into a series of complex political developments after the Civil War. Black people themselves had fought and died to preserve the Union, and they had earned the grudging respect of many white people and the open admiration of others. Black leaders in meetings and petitions insisted that their rights be recognized.

White northerners—led by the Radical Republicans—were convinced that President Johnson was wrong to support policies that permitted white southerners to retain pre-Civil War leaders while the black codes virtually made freedmen slaves again. Republicans were determined that white southerners realize that their defeat had doomed the prewar status quo. Republicans established a Reconstruction program to disfranchise key southern leaders while providing legal rights to freedmen. The right to vote, they reasoned, would enable black people to deal more effectively with white southerners and strengthen the Republican Party in the South.

The result was to make the mid to late 1860s one of the few high points in African-American history. During this period, not only was slavery abolished, but black southerners were able to organize schools and churches, and black people throughout the South acquired legal and political rights that would have been incomprehensible before the war. Yet black people did not stand on the brink of utopia. Most freedmen still lacked land and had no realistic hope of obtaining much, if any, of it. In addition, white violence and cruelty continued almost unabated across much of the South. Still, for millions of African Americans, the future looked more promising than ever before in American history.

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CHAPTER TIMELINE

AFRICAN-AMERICAN EVENTS

NATIONAL EVENTS

1862–1864

March 1862
The Port Royal Experiment in South Carolina begins

October 1864
Black national convention in Syracuse, New York

February 1862
Julia Ward Howe publishes the first version of “Battle Hymn of the Republic” in the *Atlantic Monthly*

July 1862
Morrill Land-Grant College Act signed into law

November 1864
President Lincoln reelected

1865–1866

January 1865
General Sherman’s Special Field Order #15

March 1865
Freedmen’s Bureau established

September–November 1865
Black codes enacted

February 1866
Southern Homestead Act

March 1866
President Johnson vetoes bill to extend the Freedman’s Bureau and the Civil Rights Bill

April 1866
Congress overrides Johnson’s veto of the Civil Rights Bill

May 1866
Memphis riot

July 1866
Congress enacts new Freedmen’s Bureau bill over Johnson’s veto; New Orleans riot

April 1865
Lincoln is assassinated; Andrew Johnson succeeds to presidency

May 1865
Johnson begins presidential Reconstruction

June–August 1865
Southern state governments reorganized

December 1865
Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution ratified

November 1866
Republicans gain greater than two-thirds majorities in House and Senate

1867–1969

Spring–Summer 1867
Union Leagues and the Republican Party organized in southern states

1869
The National Colored Labor Union established under the leadership of Isaac Myers

March 1867
Congress passes the first Reconstruction Act over President Johnson’s veto

The United States purchases Alaska from Russia

February 1868
House impeaches President Johnson

May 1868
Senate acquits Johnson by one vote

July 1868
Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution ratified

November 1868
Ulysses S. Grant elected president

May 1869
Transcontinental railroad completed

On MyHistoryLab



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What did freedom mean to ex-slaves? How did their priorities differ from those of African Americans who had been free before the Civil War?
2. What did the former slaves and the former slaveholders want after emancipation? Were these desires realistic? How did former slaves and former slaveholders disagree after the end of slavery?
3. Why did African Americans form separate churches, schools, and social organizations after the Civil War? What role did the black church play in the black community?
4. How effective was the Freedmen's Bureau? How successful was it in assisting ex-slaves to live in freedom?
5. Why did southern states enact black codes?
6. Why did Radical Republicans object to President Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction policies? Why did Congress impose its own Reconstruction policies?
7. Why were laws passed to enable black men to vote?
8. Why did black men gain the right to vote but not possession of land?
9. Did congressional Reconstruction secure full equality for African Americans as American citizens?

RECOMMENDED READING

Ira Berlin and Leslie Rowland, eds. *Families and Freedom: A Documentary History of African-American Kinship in the Civil War Era*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. A collection of documents that conveys the aspirations and frustrations of freedmen.

David W. Blight. *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001. This outstanding study shows how white Americans "remembered" the Civil War and reconciled their sectional differences by essentially forgetting the role and contributions of African Americans.

James Conn. *Sick From Freedom: African American Illness and Suffering During the Civil War and Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. This pathbreaking account traces the devastating impact that smallpox had on African Americans as they gained their freedom.

W. E. B. Du Bois. *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1935. A classic account of Reconstruction challenging the traditional interpretation that it was a tragic era marked by corrupt and inept black rule of the South.

Eric Foner. *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863–1877*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988. The best and most comprehensive account of Reconstruction.

Herbert G. Gutman. *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1976. An illustration of how African-American family values and kinship ties forged in slavery endured after emancipation.

Steven Hahn. *A Nation Under Our Feet: Black Political Struggles in the Rural South from Slavery to the Great Migration*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003. In a sophisticated analysis, Hahn explores how African Americans conceived of themselves as political people and organized from slavery through Reconstruction and disfranchisement to the 1920s.

Tera W. Hunter. *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors after the Civil War*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. An examination of the interior lives of black women, their work, social welfare, and leisure.

Gerald D. Jaynes. *Branches Without Roots: Genesis of the Black Working Class in the American South, 1862–1882*. New York: Pantheon, 1986. Examines the changes in work patterns and the labor of African Americans after slavery.

Leon F. Litwack. *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979. A rich and detailed account of the transition to freedom largely based on recollections of former slaves.

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RETRACING THE ODYSSEY

The Avery Research Center for African-American History and Culture, Charleston, South Carolina. In 1865 the American Missionary Association opened a private school for black youngsters that served the Charleston community until 1954. The renovated structure currently contains an archive, a restored classroom, and exhibits devoted to African-American life in the Carolina low country.

Shaw University and St. Augustine's College, Raleigh, North Carolina. These are two of the many black colleges established during Reconstruction. The Baptists founded Shaw in 1865, and its impressive Estey Hall has survived almost 130 years. The Episcopal Church and the Freedmen's Bureau collaborated to found St. Augustine's in 1867.

Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee. The American Missionary Association established Fisk in 1866. Magnificent Jubilee Hall is the nation's oldest building dedicated to the higher education of black students. It was completed in 1876. There is an impressive

collection of European and American art on the campus at the Carl Van Vechten Art Gallery.

St. Stephen African Methodist Episcopal Church, Wilmington, North Carolina. Following the Civil War, black members of the Front Street Methodist Church withdrew and founded their own church on Red Cross Street. In 1880 they began construction of the current building. For a time parishioners met in the basement while work continued on the imposing and ornate sanctuary above them.

Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor. In 2006 Congress established this 12,000-square-mile corridor that extends along the South Atlantic coast from Wilmington, North Carolina, through South Carolina and Georgia, to Jacksonville, Florida. It was created to recognize the cultural contributions, language, and way of life that has prevailed among people of African descent on the sea islands and the low country since the seventeenth century.

13

1868–1877

The Meaning of Freedom: The Failure of Reconstruction

 Listen to Chapter 13
on MyHistoryLab

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 13-1 What political offices were black men elected to—and not elected to—during Reconstruction?
- 13-2 What issues were of most concern to black political leaders, and what were the results of their attempts to initiate change in the South?
- 13-3 Why were so many white southerners opposed to black and white Republicans exercising political power?
- 13-4 Why was the Ku Klux Klan founded, and how effective was it?
- 13-5 What were the origins and effects of the Fifteenth Amendment and the Enforcement Acts?
- 13-6 How and why did black and white Republicans lose control of every southern state by 1877?
- 13-7 What were the methods used and results of attempts to “redeem” the southern states?

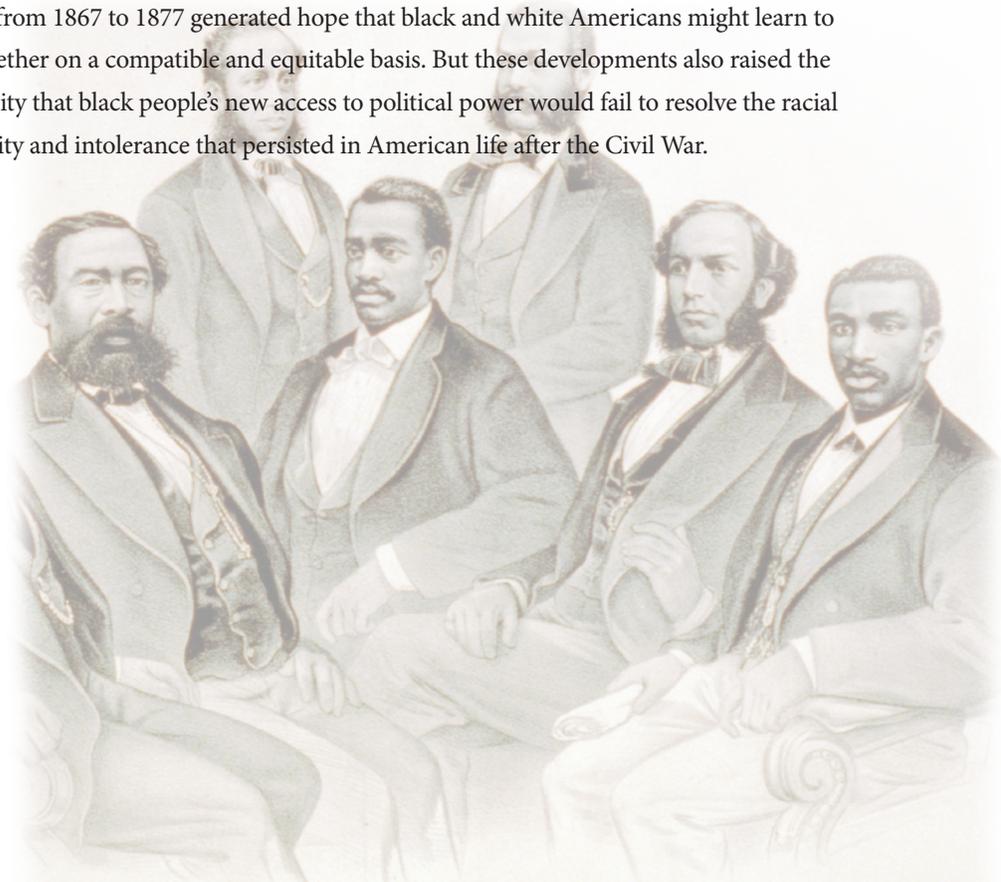
Let us with a fixed, firm, hearty, earnest, and unswerving determination move steadily on and on, fanning the flame of true liberty until the last vestige of oppression shall be destroyed, and when that eventful period shall arrive, when, in the selection of rulers, both State and Federal, we shall know no North, no East, no South, no West, no white nor colored, no Democrat nor Republican, but shall choose men because of their moral and intrinsic value, their honesty and integrity, their love of unmixed liberty, and their ability to perform well the duties to be committed to their charge.

From a speech delivered in 1872, by Jonathan J. Wright, Associate Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court

In 1868, for the first time in American history, thousands of black men would elect hundreds of black and white leaders to state and local offices across the South. Would this newly acquired political influence enable freedmen to complete the transition from slavery to freedom? Would political power propel black people into the mainstream of American society? Equally important, would white southerners and northerners accept black people as fellow citizens?

Events from 1867 to 1877 generated hope that black and white Americans might learn to live together on a compatible and equitable basis. But these developments also raised the possibility that black people’s new access to political power would fail to resolve the racial animosity and intolerance that persisted in American life after the Civil War.

These are the first African Americans to serve in the U.S. Congress. Standing, left to right: Robert C. DeLarge, representative, South Carolina; Jefferson Long, representative, Georgia; Seated, left to right: U.S. Senator Hiram R. Revels, Mississippi; Benjamin S. Turner, representative, Alabama; Josiah T. Walls, representative, Florida; Joseph H. Rainey, representative, South Carolina; Robert B. Elliott, representative, South Carolina.



Constitutional Conventions

13-1 What political offices were black men elected to—and not elected to—during Reconstruction?

Black men as a group first entered politics as delegates to constitutional conventions in the southern states in 1867 and 1868. Each of the former Confederate states, except Tennessee, which had already been restored to the Union, elected delegates to these conventions. Most southern white men were Democrats. They boycotted these elections to protest Congress's assumption of authority over Reconstruction and the extension of voting privileges to black men. Thus, the delegates to the conventions that met to frame new state constitutions to replace those drawn up in 1865 under President Johnson's authority were mostly Republicans joined by a few conservative southern Democrats. The Republicans represented three constituencies. One consisted of white northern migrants who moved to the South after the war. They were disparagingly called **carpetbaggers** because they were said to have arrived in the South with all their possessions in a single carpetbag. A second group consisted of native white southerners, mostly small farmers in devastated upland regions of the South who hoped for economic relief from Republican governments. Other southern white people denigrated them as **scalawags**, or scoundrels. African Americans made up the third and largest Republican constituency.

Of the 1,000 men elected as delegates to the 10 state conventions, 265 were black. Black delegates were a majority only in the South Carolina and Louisiana conventions. In most states, including Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Virginia, North Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas, black men made up 10 to 20 percent of the delegates. At least 107 of the 265 black delegates had been born slaves. About 40 had served in the Union Army. Several were well-educated teachers and ministers. Others were tailors, blacksmiths, barbers, and farmers. Most went on to hold other political offices.

These delegates produced impressive constitutions. Unlike previous state constitutions in the South, the new constitutions ensured that all adult males could vote, and except in Mississippi and Virginia, they did not disfranchise many former Confederates. They conferred broad guarantees of civil rights. In several states they provided the first statewide systems of public education. These constitutions were progressive, not radical. Black and white Republicans hoped to attract support from white southerners for the new state governments these documents created by encouraging state support for private businesses, especially railroad construction.

Elections

Elections were held in 1868 to ratify the new constitutions and elect officials. The white Democratic response varied. In some states, Democrats boycotted the elections. In others, they participated but voted against ratification, and in still other states they supported ratification and attempted to elect as many Democrats as possible. Congress required only a majority of those voting—not a majority of all registered voters—to ratify the constitutions. In each state, a majority of those voting eventually voted to ratify, and in each state, black men were elected to office.

Black Political Leaders

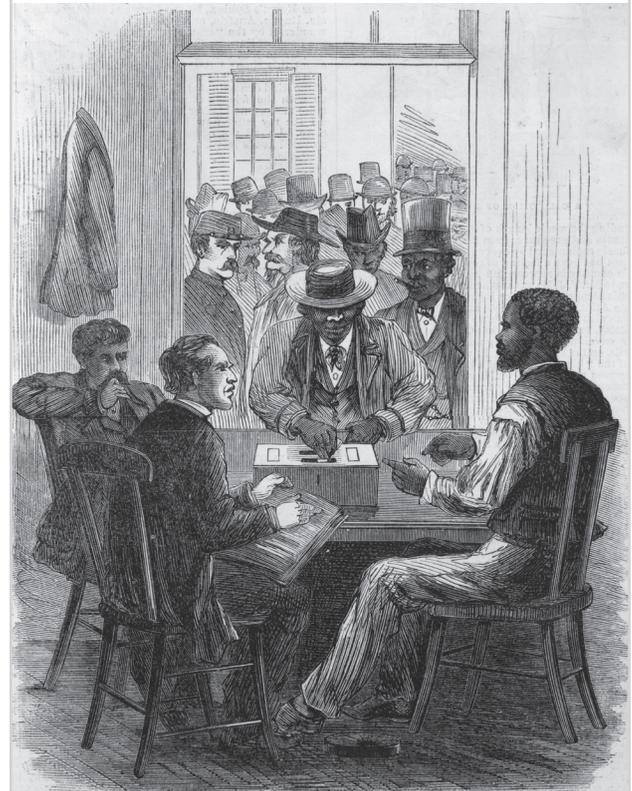
Over the next decade, 1,465 black men held political office in the South. Although black leaders individually and collectively enjoyed significant political leverage, white Republicans dominated politics during Reconstruction. In general, the number of black officials in a state reflected the

carpetbagger The derogatory term used during Reconstruction to describe northerners who came South following the Civil War to take advantage of political and economic opportunities. They were labeled “carpetbaggers” because they ostensibly carried all of their possessions in a solitary carpetbag.

scalawag The derogatory term used during Reconstruction to identify a native white southerner who supported black and white Republicans. They were considered traitors to their people and the Democratic Party.



View on MyHistoryLab Closer Look: The First Vote



Southern black men cast ballots for the first time in 1867 in the election of delegates to state constitutional conventions. The ballots were provided by the candidates or political parties, not by state or municipal officials. Most nineteenth-century elections were not by secret ballot.

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TABLE 13-1 AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULATION AND OFFICEHOLDING DURING RECONSTRUCTION IN THE STATES SUBJECT TO CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

	African-American Population in 1870	African-Americans as Percentage of Total Population	Number of African-American Officeholders During Reconstruction
South Carolina	415,814	58.9	314
Mississippi	444,201	53.6	226
Louisiana	364,210	50.1	210
North Carolina	391,650	36.5	180
Alabama	475,510	47.6	167
Georgia	545,142	46.0	108
Virginia	512,841	41.8	85
Florida	91,689	48.7	58
Arkansas	122,169	25.2	46
Texas	253,475	30.9	46
Tennessee	322,331	25.6	20

SOURCE: Eric Foner, *Freedom's Lawmakers: A Directory of Black Officeholders During Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), xiv; *The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Ninth Census (1873)*, xvii.

size of that state's African-American population. Black people were a substantial majority of the population in just Mississippi and South Carolina, and most of the black officeholders came from those two states and Louisiana, where black people were a slight majority. In most states, such as Arkansas, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas, where black people made up between 25 and 40 percent of the population, far fewer black men were elected to office (see Table 13-1).

Initially, black men chose not to run for the most important political offices because they feared their election would further alienate angry white southerners. But as white Re-

publicans swept into office in 1868, black leaders reversed their strategy, and by 1870 black men had been elected to many key positions. No black man was elected governor, but Lieutenant Governor P. B. S. Pinchback served one month (December 1872 to January 1873) as governor in Louisiana after the white governor was removed from office. Blanche K. Bruce and Hiram Revels represented Mississippi in the U.S. Senate. Beginning with Joseph Rainey in 1870 in South Carolina, 14 black men served in the U.S. House of Representatives during Reconstruction. Six black men served as lieutenant governors. In Mississippi and South Carolina, a majority of the representatives in state houses were black men, and each of these states had two black speakers of the house in the 1870s. Jonathan J. Wright, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, served seven years as a supreme court justice in South Carolina. Four black men served as state superintendents of education, and Francis L. Cardozo served as South Carolina's secretary of state and then treasurer. During Reconstruction, 112 black state senators and 683 black representatives were elected. There were also 41 black sheriffs, five black mayors, and 31 black coroners. Tallahassee, Florida, and Little Rock, Arkansas, had black police chiefs.

Many of these men—by background, experience, and education—were well qualified. However, others were not. Of the 1,465 black officeholders, at least 378 had been free before the Civil War, 933 were literate, and 195 were illiterate (we lack information about the remaining 337). In addition, 64 had attended college or professional school. In fact, 14 of the leaders had been students at Oberlin College in Ohio, which began admitting both black and female students before the Civil War.

Black farmers and artisans—tailors, carpenters, and barbers—were well represented among those who held political office. There were also



Hiram R. Revels represented Mississippi in the U.S. Senate from February 1870 until March 1871, completing an unexpired term. He went on to serve as Mississippi's secretary of state. He was born free in Fayetteville, North Carolina, in 1822. He attended Knox College in Illinois before the Civil War. In 1874 he abandoned the Republican Party and became a Democrat. By the 1890s he had acquired a sizable plantation near Natchez.

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237 ministers and 172 teachers. At least 129 had served in the Union Army, and 46 had worked for the Freedmen's Bureau.

Several black politicians were wealthy, and a few were former slave owners. Antoine Dubuclet, who became Louisiana's treasurer, had owned more than one hundred slaves and land valued at more than \$100,000 before the Civil War. Former slave Ferdinand Havis became a member of the Arkansas House of Representatives. He owned a saloon, a whiskey business, and 2,000 acres near Pine Bluff, where he became known as "the Colored Millionaire."

Although black men did not take over any state politically, a few did dominate districts with sizable black populations. Before he was elected to the U.S. Senate, Blanche K. Bruce all but controlled Bolivar County, Mississippi, where he served as sheriff, tax collector, and superintendent of education. Former slave and Civil War hero Robert Smalls was the political "kingpin" in Beaufort, South Carolina. He served in the South Carolina house and senate and in the U.S. House of Representatives. He was also a member of the South Carolina constitutional conventions in 1868 and 1895.



Read on MyHistoryLab

Document: An African-American Senator Decries Democratic Political Violence, 1876

The Issues

13-2 What issues were of most concern to black political leaders, and what were the results of their attempts to initiate change in the South?

Many but not all black and white Republican leaders favored increasing the authority of state governments to promote the welfare of all the state's citizens. Before the Civil War, most southern states did not provide schools, medical care, assistance for the mentally impaired, or prisons. Such concerns—if attended to at all—were left to local communities or families.

Education and Social Welfare

Black leaders were eager to increase literacy and promote education among black people. Republicans created statewide systems of public education throughout the South. It was a difficult and expensive task, and the results were only a limited success. Schools had to be built, teachers employed, and textbooks provided. To pay for it, taxes were increased in states still reeling from the war.

In many rural areas, schools were not built. In other places, teachers were not paid. Some people—black and white—opposed compulsory education laws, preferring to let parents determine whether their children should attend school or work to help the family. Some black leaders favored a poll tax on voting to fund the schools. Thus, although Reconstruction leaders established a strong commitment to public education, the results they achieved were uneven.

Furthermore, white parents refused to send their children to integrated schools. Although no laws required segregation, public schools during and after Reconstruction were invariably segregated. However, black parents were usually more concerned that their children attend school, and were less concerned that the schools were integrated. In any case, the schools in New Orleans were mixed.

Reconstruction leaders also supported higher education. In 1872 Mississippi legislators took advantage of the 1862 federal Morrill Land-Grant Act, which provided states with funds for agricultural and mechanical colleges, to found the first historically black state university: Alcorn A&M College. Although the university was named after white Republican Governor James L. Alcorn, former U.S. Senator Hiram Revels was its first president. The South Carolina legislature created a similar college and attached it to the Methodist-sponsored Claflin University.

Black leaders in the state legislature compelled the University of South Carolina, which had been all white, to admit black students and hire black faculty. As a result, many of the white students and faculty left. Several black politicians enrolled in the law and medical programs at the university. Richard Greener, a black Harvard graduate, served on the university's faculty and was its librarian.

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Despite the costs, Reconstruction leaders also created the first state-supported institutions for the insane, the blind, and the deaf in much of the South. Some southern states during Reconstruction began to offer medical care and public health programs. Some states established orphanages and built prisons. Black leaders also supported revisions to state criminal codes, the elimination of corporal punishment for many crimes, and a reduction in the number of capital crimes.

Civil Rights

Black politicians were often the victims of racial discrimination when they tried to use public transportation and accommodations such as hotels and restaurants. Rather than provide separate arrangements for black customers, white-owned businesses simply excluded black patrons. This was true in the North as well as the South. The Civil War hero Robert Smalls, for example, was ejected from a Philadelphia streetcar in 1864. After protests, the company agreed to accept black riders. In Arkansas, Mifflin Gibbs (see Profile: The Gibbs Brothers) and W. Hines Furbish successfully sued a local saloon after they had been denied service. In South Carolina, Jonathan J. Wright won \$1,200 in a lawsuit against a railroad after he had purchased a first-class ticket but had been forced to ride in the second-class coach.

Black leaders' determination to open public facilities to all people revealed deep divisions between themselves and white Republicans. In several southern states they introduced bills to prevent proprietors from excluding black people from restaurants, barrooms, hotels, concert halls, and auditoriums, as well as railroad coaches, streetcars, and steamboats. Many white Republicans and virtually every Democrat attacked such proposals as efforts to promote social equality and gain access for black people to places where they were not welcome. White politicians blocked these laws in most states. Only South Carolina—with a black majority in the house and many black senators—enacted such a law, but it was not effectively enforced. In Mississippi, the Republican Governor James L. Alcorn vetoed a bill to outlaw racial discrimination by railroads. In Alabama and North Carolina, civil rights bills were defeated, and Georgia and Arkansas enacted measures that encouraged segregation.

Economic Issues

Black politicians sought to promote economic development in general and for black people in particular. For example, white landowners sometimes fired black agricultural laborers near the end of the growing season and then did not pay them. Some of these landowners were dishonest, but others were in debt and could not pay their workers. To prevent such abuses, black politicians secured laws that required laborers to be paid before the crop was sold or when it was sold. Some black leaders who had been slaves also wanted to regulate wages, but these proposals failed because most Republicans did not believe states had the authority to regulate wages and prices.

Legislators also enacted measures that protected the land and property of small farmers against seizure for nonpayment of debts. Black and white farmers who lost land, tools, animals, and other property because they could not pay their debts were unlikely to recover financially. “Stay laws” prohibited, or “stayed,” authorities from taking property. Besides protecting poor farmers, Republicans hoped these laws would weaken support among white yeomen for the Democratic Party and draw them into the Republican Party.

Land

Black leaders were unable to provide land to landless black and white farmers. Many black and white political leaders believed the state had no right to distribute land. Again, South Carolina was the exception. Its legislature created a state land commission in 1869.

The commission could purchase and distribute land to freedmen. It also gave the freedmen loans on generous terms to pay for the land. Unfortunately, the commission was corrupt and inefficiently managed and had little fertile land to distribute. Yet despite its many difficulties, the commission enabled more than 14,000 black families and a few white families to acquire land in South Carolina. Their descendants still possess some of this land today.

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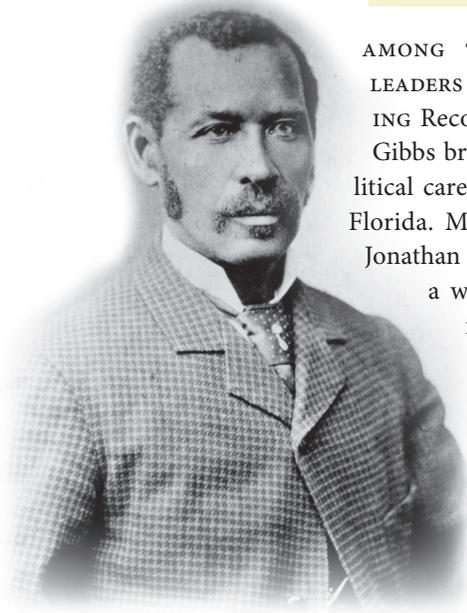
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PROFILE The Gibbs Brothers



Mifflin Gibbs was probably the only African American in the nineteenth century elected to political office in two nations. He served as a city councilman in Victoria, British Columbia, in Canada in the late 1860s, and he was elected a judge in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1873.

AMONG THE MANY BLACK LEADERS WHO EMERGED DURING Reconstruction were the Gibbs brothers, who had political careers in Arkansas and Florida. Mifflin W. Gibbs and Jonathan C. Gibbs grew up in a well-to-do, free black family in Philadelphia, where their father was a Methodist minister. But their paths diverged, and they spent little time together as adults.

Mifflin was born in 1823 and became a building contractor. By the 1840s, he was an active abolitionist. With the discovery of gold in California in 1849, he went west and eventually established California's first black newspaper, the *Mirror of the Times*.

He led a protest in 1851 against a California constitution provision that denied black men the right to vote. In 1858 he left California for Canada, again because gold had been discovered. He spent more than 10 years in Canada as a businessman involved in real estate and a coal company. In 1866 he was elected to the Victoria City Council in British Columbia. He returned to the United States in

1869, and graduated from the law program at Oberlin College in 1870.

Mifflin moved to Arkansas in 1871 and was elected municipal judge in Little Rock in 1873. Although defeated for reelection, he remained involved in the Republican Party and was a delegate to every Republican national convention from 1876 to 1904. In 1897, Republican President William McKinley appointed him U.S. consul to Madagascar, a French island colony off the east coast of Africa, where he served until 1901. He died in 1915, and a black high school in Little Rock was named in his honor.

Jonathan, born in 1827 or 1828, also joined the abolitionist movement. Rejected by 18 colleges because of his color, he finally graduated from Dartmouth in 1852. He then went to Princeton Theological Seminary and became a Presbyterian minister in Troy, New York.

Jonathan attended the 1864 National Black Convention in Syracuse, New York; taught at a freedmen's school in North Carolina; and then spent two years in Charleston, South Carolina. There he joined those black leaders who favored limiting the right to vote to literate men if that restriction were applied both to black and white people.

In 1867, Jonathan moved to Florida, where he became a key Republican leader and the state's highest-ranking black official. He was elected to the 1868 Florida constitutional convention, and the Republican governor appointed him secretary of state. Although defeated for a seat in Congress in 1868, he remained one of Florida's most visible black leaders and was repeatedly threatened by the Ku Klux Klan. In 1873, another Republican governor appointed him state superintendent of education. Jonathan Gibbs died in 1874, but his son Thomas served in the Florida House of Representatives, where he was instrumental in establishing Florida A&M University.

Although some black leaders were reluctant to use the states' power to distribute land, others had no qualms about raising property taxes so high that large landowners would be forced to sell some of their property to pay their taxes. Abraham Galloway of North Carolina explained, "I want to see the man who owns one or two thousand acres of land, taxed a dollar on the acre, and if they can't pay the taxes, sell their property to the highest bidder . . . and then we negroes shall become the land holders."

Business and Industry

Black and white leaders had an easier time enacting legislation to support business and industry. Like most Americans after the Civil War, Republicans believed that expanding the railroad network would stimulate employment, improve transportation, and generate prosperity. State governments approved the sale of state-supported bonds to finance railroad construction. In Georgia, Alabama, Texas, and Arkansas, the railroad network did expand; however, the bonded debt of these states soared, and taxes increased to pay for it. Moreover, railroad

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financing was often corrupt. Most of the illegal money wound up in the pockets of white businessmen and politicians. Black politicians rarely had access to large financial transactions.

So attractive were business profits that some black political leaders formed corporations. They invested modest sums and believed—like so many capitalists—that the rewards outweighed the risks. In Charleston, 28 black leaders (and two white politicians) formed a horse-drawn streetcar line they called the Enterprise Railroad to carry freight between the city wharves and the railroad terminal. Black leaders in South Carolina also created a company to extract the phosphate used for fertilizer from riverbeds and riverbanks in the low country. Neither business lasted long. Black men found it far more difficult than white entrepreneurs to finance their corporations.

Black Politicians: An Evaluation

Southern black political leaders on the state level did create the foundation for public education; for state assistance for the blind, deaf, and insane; and for reforming the criminal justice system. They tried (but mostly failed) to outlaw racial discrimination in public facilities and encouraged state support for economic expansion.

But black leaders could not significantly improve the lives of their constituents. Because white Republicans almost always outnumbered them, they could not enact an agenda of their own. Moreover, black leaders often disagreed among themselves about issues and programs. Class and prewar status frequently divided them. Those leaders who had not been slaves and had not been raised in rural isolation were less likely to be concerned with land and agricultural labor. More prosperous black leaders showed more interest in civil rights and encouraging business. Even when they agreed about the need for public education, black leaders often disagreed about how to finance it and whether it should be compulsory.

Republican Factionalism

13-3 Why were so many white southerners opposed to black and white Republicans exercising political power?

Disagreements among black leaders paled compared to the conflicts that divided the Republican Party during Reconstruction. Black and white Republicans often disagreed on political issues and strategy, but the lack of party cohesion and discipline was even more harmful. The Republican Party in the South constantly split into factions as groups fought with each other. Most disagreements were over who should run for and hold political office.

Hundreds of would-be Republican leaders—black and white—sought public offices. If they lost the Republican nomination, they often formed a competing slate of candidates. Then Republicans ran against each other and against the Democrats in the general election. It was not a recipe for political success.

These bitter and angry contests were based less on race and issues than on the desperate desire to gain an office that would pay even a modest salary. Most black and white Republicans were not well off. Public office assured them a modicum of economic security.

Ironically, these factional disputes led to a high turnover in political leadership and the loss of that very economic security. It was difficult for black leaders (and white leaders too) to be renominated and reelected to more than one or two terms. Few officeholders served three or four consecutive terms in the same office during Reconstruction. This made for inexperienced leadership and added to Republican woes.

Opposition

Even if black and Republican leaders had been less prone to fighting among themselves and more effective in adopting a political platform, they might still have failed to sustain themselves for long. Most white southerners led by conservative Democrats remained absolutely

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PROFILE The Rollin Sisters



Frances Rollin Whipper was an author, teacher, political activist, wife, and mother. With her sisters, she was deeply involved in Reconstruction politics in South Carolina.

FEW WOMEN, BLACK OR WHITE, were as influential in Reconstruction politics as the Rollin sisters of South Carolina. Although they could not vote or hold political office, the five sisters, and especially Frances and Katherine, were closely associated with the black and white Republican leadership in South Carolina. With their education, knowledge, and charm, these black women affected political decisions and policies.

The sisters were born and raised in the elite antebellum free black community in Charleston. Their father, William Rollin, a prosperous lumber dealer, was descended from French Catholic Haitians and insisted that his daughters obtain a first-rate education. Frances, who was born in 1844, was sent to Philadelphia to take the “ladies course” at the Quaker’s Institute for Colored Youth. At least two of the other sisters attended school in Boston. After the war, Frances joined other members of Charleston’s prominent people of color and taught at schools sponsored by the American Missionary Association. She also wrote the biography of the black abolitionist leader Martin Delany. This was the first major nonfiction work a black woman published in America, but she felt compelled to conceal her identity under a male name, Frank A. Rollin.

In 1867 and 1868, as black men were entering the political arena, the Rollin sisters also gravitated to politics. Against her father’s wishes, Frances married one of South Carolina’s most controversial figures, William Whipper, a black attorney from Philadelphia who settled in Beaufort, South Carolina, after

the war. (Whipper was the nephew of the antebellum black Pennsylvania businessman, also named William Whipper, profiled in Chapter 7.) He was elected to the state constitutional convention and then to the South Carolina House of Representatives. Whipper was a tough, able, shrewd, and not altogether honest politician. He enjoyed an expensive lifestyle. Most white people detested him.

While the legislature was in session, the Whippers and the Rollin sisters lived in Columbia, the state capital. There, the sisters were extraordinarily popular. They were well educated, intelligent, refined, and sophisticated. One observer described them as “ravishingly beautiful.” Katherine Rollin was frequently seen with white State Senator George W. McIntyre.

The Rollin sisters were enthusiastic proponents of women’s rights and women’s suffrage who enlisted the wives of prominent black and white Republicans in their cause. Charlotte and Katherine organized a women’s rights convention in Columbia in 1870 and formed the South Carolina branch of the American Women’s Suffrage Association.

Charlotte Rollin pleaded for the right to vote:

We ask suffrage not as a favor, not as a privilege, but as a right based on the grounds that we are human beings and as such entitled to human rights. While we concede that woman’s ennobling influence should be confined chiefly to the home and society, we claim that public opinion has had a tendency to limit a woman’s sphere to too small a circle and until woman has the right of representation this will last, and other rights will be held by insecure tenure.

Their black and white male allies tried to amend South Carolina’s constitution to enable women to vote, but the legislature rejected it after a bitter debate.

After the Democrats regained political power in 1877, the Rollin sisters left for the North. Charlotte and Louise settled with their mother in Brooklyn, New York. William and Frances Whipper and their five children moved to Washington, DC, in 1882, where he practiced law and she was a clerk in the General Land Office. Three of their children survived to adulthood. Their sole son, Leigh Whipper, was a prominent stage and screen actor in the 1940s and 1950s. Sometime in the 1890s, Frances joined her husband in Beaufort. She died there in 1901.

opposed to letting black men vote or hold office. As a white Floridian put it, “The damned Republican Party has put niggers to rule us and we will not suffer it.” Of course, just because black people voted did not mean they ruled during Reconstruction; however, many white people failed to grasp that. Instead, for most white southerners, the only acceptable political system was one that excluded black men and the Republican Party.

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As far as most white people were concerned, the end of slavery and the enfranchisement of black men did not make black people their equals. They did not accept the Fourteenth Amendment, and they attacked Republican governments and their leaders unrelentingly. White southerners blamed the Republicans for an epidemic of waste and corruption in state government. But most of all, they considered it preposterous and outrageous that former slaves could vote and hold office.

James S. Pike spoke for many white people when he ridiculed black leaders in the South Carolina House of Representatives in 1873:

The body is almost literally a Black Parliament. . . . The Speaker is black, the Clerk is black, the door-keepers are black, the little pages are black, the chairman of the Ways and Means is black, and the chaplain is coal-black. At some of the desks sit colored men whose types it would be hard to find outside of Congo; whose costume, visages, attitudes, and expression only befit the forecabin of a buccaner. It must be remembered, also, that these men, with not more than a half a dozen exceptions, have been themselves slaves, and that their ancestors were slaves for generations.

Pike's observations circulated widely in both the North and the South.

White southerners were determined to rid themselves of Republicans and the disgrace of having to live with black men who possessed political rights. White southerners would "redeem" their states by restoring white Democrats to power. This meant not just defeating black and white Republicans in elections but removing them from politics entirely. White southerners believed any means—fair or foul—were justified in exorcising this evil.

The Ku Klux Klan

13-4 Why was the Ku Klux Klan founded, and how effective was it?

If the presence of black men in politics was illegitimate—in the eyes of white southerners—then it was acceptable to use violence to remove them. This thinking gave rise to militant terrorist organizations, such as the **Ku Klux Klan**, the Knights of the White Camellia, the White Brotherhood, and the Whitecaps. They were terrorists who resorted to threats, intimidation, beatings, rapes, and murder to restore conservative white Democratic rule and to force black people back into subordination.

The Ku Klux Klan, founded in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866, was originally a social club for Confederate veterans who adopted secret oaths and rituals—similar to the Union Leagues but with far more deadly consequences. One of the key figures in the Klan's rapid growth was former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, who became its leader or grand wizard. The Klan drew its members from all classes of white society, not merely from among the poor. Businessmen, lawyers, physicians, and politicians, as well as farmers and planters, were active in the Klan. The Klan and other armed groups functioned mainly where black people were a large minority and where their votes could affect elections. Klansmen virtually took over areas of western Alabama, northern Georgia, and Florida's panhandle. The Klan controlled the up-country of South Carolina and the area around Mecklenburg County, North Carolina. However, in the Carolina and Georgia low country where there were huge black majorities, the Klan rarely, if ever, appeared.

Although the Klan and similar societies were neither well organized nor unified, they did reduce support for the Republican Party and helped eliminate its leaders. Often wearing hoods and masks to hide their faces, white terrorists embarked on a campaign of violence rarely matched and never exceeded in American history.

Mobs of marauding terrorists beat and killed hundreds of black people—and many white people. Black churches and schools were burned. Republican leaders were threatened or killed. In South Carolina in 1868, the black chairman of the Republican Party, Benjamin F. Randolph,

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Ku Klux Klan A secret society founded by former Confederates in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866. It transformed itself into a terrorist organization during Reconstruction to drive black and white Republicans from political power in southern states.



Read on MyHistoryLab

Document: Organization and Principles of the Ku Klux Klan, 1868



Read on MyHistoryLab Document: An Ex-Slave Describes a Ku Klux Klan Ride, Late 1860s



Head Quarters "Ku Klux"
 Blood! Blood!! Blood!!!
 First Quarter, Bloody Moon
 April 27, 1868
 To H. C. Warmoth
 Villain, Beware Your doom
 is sealed. Death now awaits you, The
 Midnight Owl becomes,
 Revenge! Revenge!! Revenge!!!
 Ku Klux Klan
 By Order of Grand Giant
 Bloody Knights
 Ku Klux Klan
 Prepare Death now awaits you.

The flowing white robes and cone-shaped headgear associated with the Ku Klux Klan today are mostly a twentieth-century phenomenon. The Klansmen of the Reconstruction era, like these two men in Alabama in 1868, were well armed, disguised, and prepared to intimidate black and white Republicans. The note is a Klan death threat directed at Louisiana's first Republican governor, Henry C. Warmoth.

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was murdered as he stepped off a train. Black legislator Lee Nance and white legislator Solomon G. W. Dill were later slain. In 1870 black lawmaker Richard Burke was killed in Sumter County, Alabama, because he was considered too influential among "people of his color."

As his wife looked on, Jack Dupree—a local Republican leader—had his throat cut and was eviscerated in Monroe County, Mississippi. In 1870 North Carolina Senator John W. Stephens, a white Republican, was murdered. After Alabama freedman George Moore voted for the Republicans in 1869, Klansmen beat him, raped a girl who was visiting his wife, and attacked a neighbor. An Irish-American teacher and four black men were lynched in Cross Plains, Alabama, in 1870. The outlaw John Wesley Hardin openly acknowledged he had killed black Texas state policemen.

White men attacked a Republican campaign rally in Eutaw, Alabama, in 1870, killing four black men and wounding 54 other people. After three black leaders were arrested in 1871 in Meridian, Mississippi, for delivering what many white people considered inflammatory speeches, shooting broke out in the courtroom. The Republican judge and two of the defendants were killed, and in a wave of violence, 30 black people were murdered, including every black leader in the small community. In the same year, a mob of 500 men broke into the jail in Union County, South Carolina, and lynched eight black prisoners accused of killing a Confederate veteran.

Nowhere was the Klan more active and violent than in York County, South Carolina. Almost the entire adult white male population joined in threatening, attacking, and

VOICES An Appeal for Help against the Klan

H. K. Roberts, a black lieutenant in the South Carolina militia, described Klan terror in York County in late 1870 to Governor Robert K. Scott. Roberts desperately appealed for aid to protect Republicans and defend the black community.

Dec. the 6th 1870.

Antioch P.O.
York County S.C.

To Your Excelency R. K. Scott

Sir I will tell you that on last friday night the 2nd day of this [month] 8 miles from here thier was one of the worst outrages Committed that is on record in the state from 50 to 75 armed men went to the house of Thomas Blacks a colored man fired shots into the house and cald for him he clibed up in the loft of the house they fired up their and he came down jumped out at a window ran about 30 steps was shot down then they shot him after he fell they then draged him about 10 steps and cut his throat from ear to ear their was about 30 bullet holes in his body some 50 to one hundred shots in the house. . . . [They] abused his wife and enquired for one or two more colored men some of the colored people are leaving and a great many lying out in the woods and they reports comes to me evry day that they Ku Kluxs intend to kill us all

out and I heard yesterday that they had 30 stands of arms. . . . I wish you would give me 20 or 25 men or let me enroll that many and I will stop it or catch some of them or send some U S Soldiers on for I tell you their must be something don and that quick to for I do believe that they intend to beat and kill out the Radical party in the upper Counties of the state where the vote is close if we was to have the ellection now the Radicals would turn [out] to vote their ticket I leave the matter with you I hope you will wright back to me by return mail and let me heare what you think you can do for us up here I cant tell whether I can hold my own or not I know some men that stay with us at night for safety but if they come as strong as they were the other night they may kill me and all of my men I remain yours truly as ever.

H.K. Roberts, Lieut.

Commanding Post of State Guards Kings Mountain

1. Why did Roberts write this letter?
2. Would Roberts have had any reason to exaggerate the violence in York County?
3. According to Roberts, what motivated white men to attack?

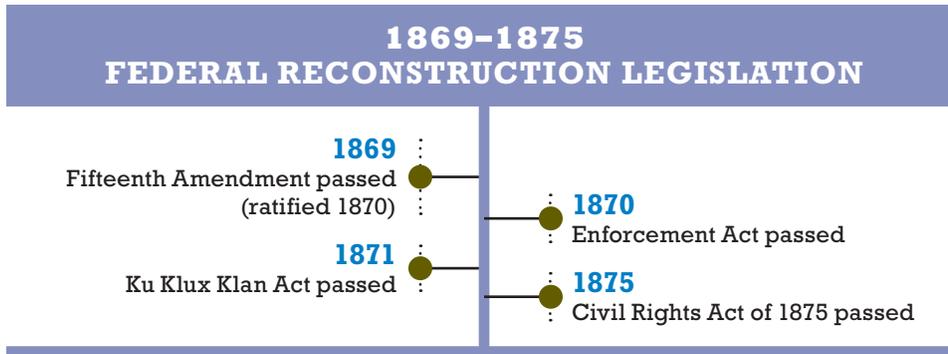
SOURCE: H. K. Roberts to Governor Robert K. Scott, South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

murdering the black population. Hundreds were beaten and at least 11 were killed. Terrified families fled into the woods. Black leaders sent appeals for help to Governor Robert K. Scott (see Voices: An Appeal for Help against the Klan).

But Scott did not send aid. He had already sent the South Carolina militia into areas of Klan activity, and even more violence had resulted. The militia was made up mostly of black men, and white terrorists retaliated by killing militia officers. Scott could not send white men to York County because most of them sympathized with the Klan. Thus, Republican governors like Scott responded ineffectually. Republican-controlled legislatures passed anti-Klan measures that made it illegal to appear in public in disguises and masks, and they strengthened laws against assault, murder, and conspiracy. Nonetheless, enforcement was weak.

A few Republican leaders did deal harshly and effectively with terrorism. Governors in Tennessee, Texas, and Arkansas declared martial law and sent in hundreds of well-armed white and black men to quell the violence. Hundreds of Klansmen were arrested, many fled, and three were executed in Arkansas. But when Governor William W. Holden of North Carolina sent the state militia after the Klan, he provoked an angry reaction. Subsequent Klan violence in 10 counties helped Democrats carry the 1870 legislative elections, and the legislature then removed Holden from office.

Outnumbered and outgunned, black people in most areas did not retaliate against the Klan, and the Klan was rarely active where black people were in a majority and prepared to defend themselves. In the cause of white supremacy, the Klan usually attacked those who could not defend themselves.



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The West

During the 1830s the U.S. government forced the Five Civilized Tribes—the Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, and Seminole—from their southern homelands to Indian Territory in what is now Oklahoma. By 1860 Native Americans there held 7,367 African Americans in slavery. Many of the Indians fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Following the war, the former slaves encountered nearly as much violence and hostility from Native Americans as they did from southern white people. Indians were reluctant to share their land with freedmen, and they vigorously opposed policies that favored black voting rights.

Gradually and despite considerable Indian prejudice, some African Americans managed to acquire tribal land. Also, the Creeks and the Seminoles permitted former slaves to take part in tribal government. Black men served in both houses of the Creek legislature—the House of Warriors and the House of Kings. An African American, Jesse Franklin, served as a justice on the Creek tribal court in 1876. In contrast, the Chickasaw and Choctaw were absolutely opposed to making concessions to freed people. Therefore, the U.S. government ordered federal troops onto Chickasaw and Choctaw lands to protect the former slaves.

Elsewhere on the western frontier, black people struggled for legal and political rights and periodically participated in territorial governments. In 1867, 200 black men voted—although white men protested—in the Montana territorial election. In the Colorado Territory, William Jefferson Hardin, a barber, campaigned with other black men for the right to vote, and in 1865 they persuaded 137 African Americans (91 percent of Colorado’s black population) to petition the territorial governor to abolish a white-only voting provision. In 1867 black men in Colorado finally gained the right to vote. Hardin later moved to Cheyenne and was elected to the Wyoming territorial legislature in 1879.

The Fifteenth Amendment

13-5 What were the origins and effects of the Fifteenth Amendment and the Enforcement Acts?

The federal government under Republican domination tried to protect black voting rights and defend Republican state governments in the South. In 1869 Congress passed the **Fifteenth Amendment**, which was ratified in 1870. It stipulated that a person could not be deprived of the right to vote because of race: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Black people, abolitionists, and reformers hailed the amendment as the culmination of the crusade to end slavery and give black people the same rights as white people.

Northern black men were the amendment’s immediate beneficiaries because, before its adoption, black men could vote in only eight northern states. Yet to the disappointment

Fifteenth Amendment This constitutional amendment stipulated that the right to vote could not be denied on account of race, color, or because a person had been a slave.

placed on its provisions, as will insure protection to the humblest citizen. Tell me nothing of a constitution which fails to shelter beneath its rightful power the people of a country.”

Armed with this new legislation, the Justice Department and Attorney General Amos T. Ackerman moved vigorously against the Klan. Hundreds of Klansmen were arrested—700 in Mississippi alone. Faced with a full-scale rebellion in late 1871 in South Carolina’s up-country, President Ulysses S. Grant declared martial law in nine counties, suspended the writ of *habeas corpus*, and sent in the army. Mass arrests and trials followed, but federal authorities permitted many Klansmen to confess and thereby escape prosecution. The government lacked the human and financial resources to bring hundreds of men to court for lengthy trials. Some white men were tried, mostly before black juries, and were imprisoned or fined. Comparatively few Klansmen, however, were punished severely, especially considering the enormity of their crimes.

The North and Reconstruction

13-6 How and why did black and white Republicans lose control of every southern state by 1877?

Although the federal government did reduce Klan violence for a time, white southerners remained convinced that white supremacy must be restored and Republican governments overturned. Klan violence did not overthrow any state governments, but it undermined freedmen’s confidence in the ability of these governments to protect them. Meanwhile, Radical Republicans in Congress grew frustrated that the South and especially black people continued to demand so much of their time and attention year after year. There was less and less sentiment in the North to continue support for the freedmen and involvement in southern affairs.

Many northern Republicans lost interest in civil rights issues and principles and became more concerned with winning elections and the economy. By the mid-1870s, there was more discussion in Congress of patronage, veterans’ pensions, railroads, taxes, tariffs, the economy, and monetary policy than about rights for black people or the future of the South.

By the 1870s, the American political system was also awash in corruption, which further detracted from concerns over the South. Although President Grant was a man of integrity, many men in his administration were not. They were implicated in scandals involving the construction of the transcontinental railroad, federal taxes on whiskey, and fraud within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Nor was the dishonesty limited to Republicans. William Marcy “Boss” Tweed and the Democratic machine that dominated New York City were notoriously corrupt.

Many Republicans began to question the necessity for more moral, military, and political support for African Americans. They were convinced that African Americans had demanded too much for too long from the national government. Former slaves had become citizens and had the right to vote and hold political office. Therefore, they did not need additional help or legislation from the federal government. Equality for black people would come from their labor as free men, which would produce wealth and acceptance by white people. Federal legislation, many northern white people believed, could not create equality.

The *Chicago Tribune*, a Republican newspaper, had wearied of black agitation by 1874: “Is it not time for the colored race to stop playing baby? The whites of America have done nobly in outgrowing old prejudices against them. They cannot hurry this process by law. Let them obtain social equality as every other man, woman, and child in the world obtain it,—by showing themselves in their lives the social equals of those with whom they wish to consort. If they do this, year by year the prejudices will die away.”

Other northern white people, swayed by white southerners’ views of black people, began to doubt the wisdom of universal manhood suffrage. Many white people who had nominally supported black suffrage began to believe the exaggerated complaints about corruption among black leaders and the unrelenting claims that freedmen were incapable of

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self-government. Some white northerners began to conclude that Reconstruction had been a mistake.

Economic conditions contributed to changing attitudes. A financial crisis—the Panic of 1873—sent the economy into a long slump. Businesses and financial institutions failed, unemployment soared, and prices fell. In 1874 the Democrats recaptured a majority in the House of Representatives for the first time since 1860 and also took control of several northern states.

The Freedmen's Bank

One of the casualties of the financial crisis was the **Freedmen's Savings Bank**, which failed in 1874. Founded in 1865 when hope flourished, the Freedmen's Savings and Trust Company had been chartered by Congress but was not connected to the Freedmen's Bureau. However, the bank's advertising featured pictures of Abraham Lincoln, and many black people assumed it was a federal agency. Freedmen and black veterans, churches, fraternal organizations, and benevolent societies opened thousands of accounts in the bank. Most of the deposits totaled under \$50, and some amounted to only a few cents.

Although the bank had many black employees, its board of directors consisted of white men. They invested the bank's funds in risky ventures, including Washington, DC, real estate. With the Panic of 1873, the bank lost large sums in unsecured railroad loans. To restore confidence, its directors persuaded Frederick Douglass to serve as president and invest \$10,000 of his own money to help shore up the bank. Douglass lost his money, and African Americans across the South lost more than \$1 million when the bank closed in June 1874. Eventually about half the depositors received three-fifths of the value of their accounts, but many African Americans believed the U.S. government owed them a debt. Well into the twentieth century, they wrote to Congress and the president in unsuccessful efforts to retrieve their hard-earned money.

The Civil Rights Act of 1875

Before Reconstruction expired, Congress made one final—some said futile—gesture to protect black people from racial discrimination when it passed the **Civil Rights Act of 1875**. Championed by Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts, it was originally intended to open public accommodations—including schools, churches, cemeteries, hotels, and transportation—to all people regardless of race. It passed in the Republican-controlled Senate in 1874, but House Democrats held up passage. It was not enacted until 1875 and then largely as a memorial to Sumner, who had died in 1874. In its final form, the bans on discrimination in churches, cemeteries, and schools were deleted.

The act stipulated “That all persons . . . shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement.” After its passage, no attempt was made to enforce these provisions, and in 1883 the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. Justice Joseph Bradley wrote that the Fourteenth Amendment protected black people from discrimination by states but not by private businesses. Black newspapers likened the decision to the *Dred Scott* case a quarter century earlier.

The End of Reconstruction

13-7

What were the methods used and results of attempts to “redeem” the southern states?

Reconstruction ended as it began—in violence and controversy. Democrats demanded “**redemption**”—a word with biblical and spiritual overtones. They wanted southern states restored to conservative, white political control. By 1875 they had regained authority in all

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Freedmen's Savings Bank A private financial institution chartered by Congress in 1865. Many black people and organizations deposited funds in the bank, which went bankrupt in 1874.

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Civil Rights Act of 1875 This federal legislation outlawed racial discrimination in public accommodations such as hotels and restaurants, and in transportation, including railroad coaches and steamboats. The Supreme Court invalidated it in 1883.



Watch on MyHistoryLab Video: The Promise and Failure of Reconstruction

redemption The term used for the process, often violent, by which white conservative Democrats regained political control of a southern state from black and white Republicans during Reconstruction.

VOICES

Black Leaders Support the Passage of a Civil Rights Act

Black Congressmen Robert Brown Elliott of South Carolina and James T. Rapier of Alabama spoke passionately in favor of the Sumner civil rights bill in 1874. Both men had been free before the war. Both were also lawyers, and although each accumulated considerable wealth, they died in poverty in the 1880s.

[James T. Rapier]

I must confess it is somewhat embarrassing for a colored man to urge the passage of this bill, because if he exhibit an earnestness in the matter and expresses a desire for its immediate passage, straightaway he is charged with a desire for social equality, as explained by the demagogue and understood by the ignorant white man. But then it is just as embarrassing for him not to do so, for, if he remains silent while the struggle is being carried on around, and for him, he is liable to be charged with a want of interest in a matter that concerns him more than anyone else, which is enough to make his friends desert his cause. So in steering away from Scylla I may run upon Charybdis. But the anomalous, and I may add the supremely ridiculous, position of the Negro at this time, in this country, compel me to say something. Here his condition is without comparison, parallel alone to itself. Just that the law recognizes my right upon this floor as a law-maker, but that there is no law to secure to me any accommodations whatever while traveling here to discharge my duties as a Representative of a large and wealthy constituency. Here I am the peer of the proudest, but on a steamboat or car I am not

equal to the most degraded. Is not this most anomalous and ridiculous?

[Robert Brown Elliott]

The results of the war, as seen in Reconstruction, have settled forever the political status of my race. The passage of this bill will determine the civil status, not only of the Negro but of any other class of citizens who may feel themselves discriminated against. It will form the capstone of that temple of liberty begun on this continent under discouraging circumstances, carried on in spite of the sneers of monarchists and the cavils of pretended friends of freedom, until at last it stands in all its beautiful symmetry and proportions, a building the grandest which the world has ever seen, realizing the most sanguine expectations and the highest hopes of those who in the name of equal, impartial and universal liberty, laid the foundation stone.

1. If black men had the right to vote and serve in Congress, why was a civil rights law needed?
2. Who would benefit most from the passage of this bill?
3. What distinction does the congressmen draw between social discrimination and political rights?

SOURCE: *Congressional Record*, 43rd Congress, 1st sess., 1874, vol. II, pt. 1, 565–67; Peggy Lamson, *The Glorious Failure* (New York: Norton, 1973), 181.

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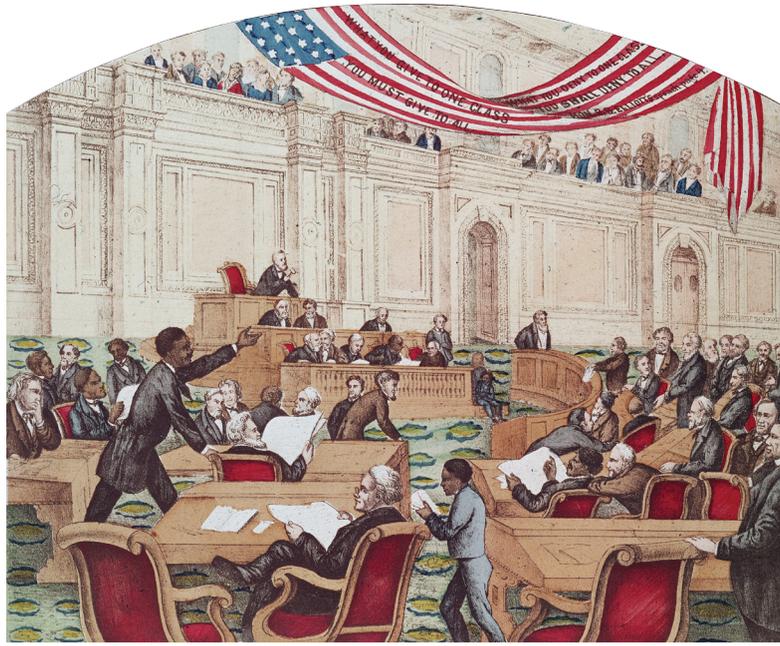
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the former Confederate states except Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina (see Map 13–1). Democrats had redeemed Tennessee in 1870 and Georgia in 1871. Democrats had learned two lessons. First, few black men would vote for the Democratic Party—no matter how much white leaders wanted to believe former slaves were easy to manipulate. Second, intimidation and violence would win elections in areas where the number of black and white voters was nearly equal. The federal government had stymied Klan violence in 1871, but by the mid-1870s the government had become reluctant to send troops to the South to protect black citizens.

Violent Redemption

In Alabama in 1874, black and white Republican leaders were murdered, and white mobs destroyed crops and homes. On election day in Eufaula, white men killed seven and injured nearly 70 unarmed black voters. Black voters were also driven from the polls in Mobile. Democrats won the election and “redeemed” Alabama.

White violence marred every election in Louisiana from 1868 to 1876. After Republicans and Democrats each claimed victory in the 1872 elections, black people seized the small town of Colfax along the Red River to protect themselves against a Democratic takeover. They held out for three weeks. Then on Easter Sunday in 1873, a well-armed white



On January 6, 1874, Robert Brown Elliott delivered a ringing speech in the U.S. House of Representatives in support of the Sumner civil rights bill. Elliott was responding in part to words uttered the day before by Virginia Congressman John T. Harris, who claimed that “there is not a gentleman on this floor who can honestly say he really believes that the colored man is created his equal.”

P.S. Duval and Son, Come and join us brothers; Civil War; Philadelphia, PA; ca. 1863. Chicago Historical Society ICHi-22051.

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Colfax Massacre At least 105 African Americans were murdered on Easter Sunday in 1873 in Colfax, Louisiana, in the single worst episode of racial violence during Reconstruction.

shotgun policy In Mississippi in 1875, white men resorted to violence and intimidation against black and white Republicans to regain political control of the state for conservative Democrats.

Hamburg Massacre White Democrats attacked black Republicans in July 1876 in the village of Hamburg, South Carolina. Five black men were murdered as the Democrats began a violent effort to redeem the state.

mob attacked the black defenders. At least 105 were killed in the **Colfax Massacre**, the worst single day of bloodshed during Reconstruction. In 1874 the White League almost redeemed Louisiana in a wave of violence. Black people were murdered, courts were attacked, and white people refused to pay taxes to the Republican state government. Six white and two black Republicans were murdered at Coushatta. In September, President Grant finally sent federal troops to New Orleans after 3,500 White Leaguers nearly wiped out the black militia and the Metropolitan Police. But the stage had been set for the 1876 campaign.

At least 105 African Americans were murdered on Easter Sunday in 1873 in Colfax, Louisiana, in the single worst episode of racial violence during Reconstruction.

The Shotgun Policy

In 1875 white Mississippians, no longer afraid the national government would intervene in force, declared open warfare on the black majority. The masks and hoods of the Klan were discarded. One newspaper proclaimed that Democrats would carry the election, “peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must.” Another paper carried a bold banner: “Mississippi is a white man’s country, and by the eternal God we’ll rule it.”

White Mississippi unleashed a campaign of violence known as the “**shotgun policy**” that was extreme even for Reconstruction. Many Republicans fled, and others were murdered. In late 1874 an estimated 300 black people were hunted down outside Vicksburg after black men armed with inferior weapons had lost a “battle” with white men. In 1875, 30 teachers, church leaders, and Republican officials were killed in Clinton. The white sheriff of Yazoo County, who had married a black woman and supported the education of black children, fled the state.

Governor Adelbert Ames appealed for federal help, but President Grant refused: “The whole public are tired out with these annual autumnal outbreaks in the South . . . [and] are ready now to condemn any interference on the part of the Government.” The terrorism intensified, and many black voters went into hiding on election day, afraid for their lives and those of their families. Democrats redeemed Mississippi and prided themselves that they—a superior race representing the most civilized of all people—were back in control.

In Florida in 1876, white Republicans noted that support for black people in the South was fading. They nominated an all-white Republican slate and even refused to renominate black Congressman Josiah Walls.

The Hamburg Massacre and the Ellenton Riot

South Carolina Democrats were divided between moderate and extreme factions, but they united to nominate former Confederate General Wade Hampton for governor after the **Hamburg Massacre**. The prelude to this event occurred on July 4, 1876—the nation’s centennial—when two white men in a buggy confronted the black militia that was drilling on a town street in Hamburg, a small, mostly black town. Hot words were exchanged, and days later, Democrats demanded the militia be disarmed. White rifle club members from around the state arrived in Hamburg and attacked the armory, where 40 black members of the militia defended themselves. The rifle companies brought up a cannon and reinforcements from Georgia. After the militia ran low on ammunition, white men captured the armory. One

white man was killed, 29 black men were taken prisoner, and the other 11 fled. Five of the black men identified as leaders were shot down in cold blood. The rifle companies wrecked the town. Seven white men were indicted for murder. All were acquitted.

Two months after the Hamburg killings a false allegation that African Americans had assaulted an elderly white woman gave armed bands of white men the excuse to attack black people in the rural community of Ellenton about 30 miles south of Hamburg. Between 30 and 100 African Americans were slain in the **Ellenton Massacre**, including state legislator Simon Coker. Two white men died. Had it not been for the timely arrival of U.S. troops, more lives would have been lost. No one was charged much less convicted in the Ellenton affair.

The Hamburg Massacre and Ellenton Riot represented the determined effort of South Carolina Democrats to imitate Mississippi's "shotgun policy." It also had forced a reluctant President Grant to send federal troops to South Carolina. In the 1876 election campaign, hundreds of white men in red flannel shirts turned out on mules and horses to support Wade Hampton against incumbent Republican Governor Daniel Chamberlain and his black and white allies. When Chamberlain and fellow Republicans tried to speak in Edgefield, 600 Red Shirts, many of them armed, ridiculed, threatened, and shouted them down.

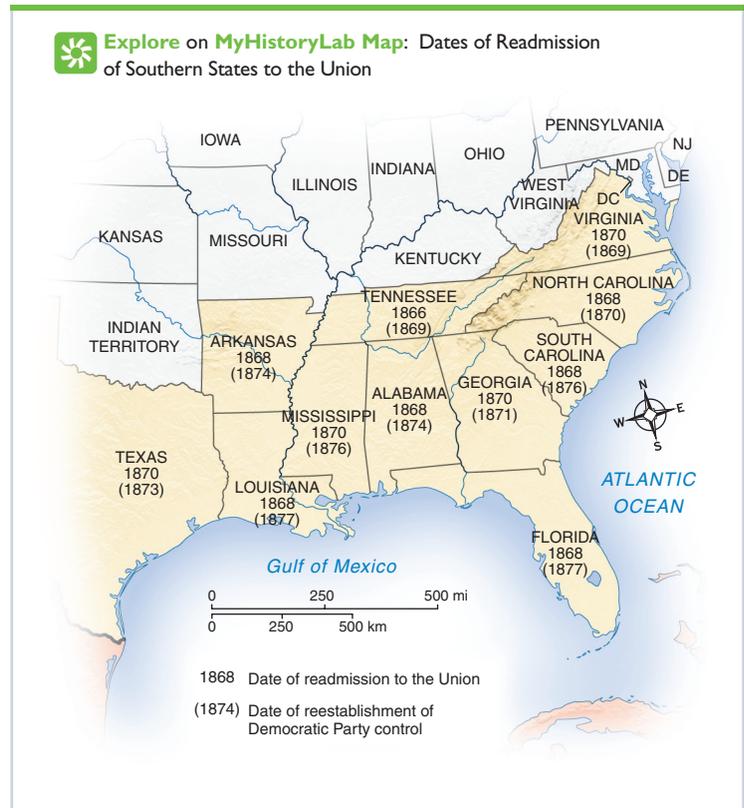
Democrats beat and killed black people to prevent them from voting. Democratic leaders instructed their followers to treat black voters with contempt: "In speeches to negroes you must remember that argument has no effect on them. They can only be influenced by their fears, superstition, and cupidity. . . . Treat them so as to show them you are a superior race and that their natural position is that of subordination to the white man."

As the election approached, black people in the up-country of South Carolina knew it would be dangerous if they tried to vote. But in the low country, black people went on the offensive and attacked Democrats. In Charleston, a white man was killed in a racial melee. At a campaign rally at Cainho, a few miles outside Charleston, armed black men killed five white men.

A few black men supported Hampton and the Red Shirts. Hampton had a paternalistic view of black people, and, although he considered them inferior, he promised to respect their rights. Martin Delany believed Hampton and the Democrats were more trustworthy than unreliable Republicans; Delany campaigned for Hampton and was later rewarded with an appointment to a minor political post. A few conservative black men during Reconstruction also supported the Democrats and curried their favor and patronage. However, most black people despised them. When one black man gave his support to the Democrats, his wife threw him and his clothes out, declaring she would prefer to "beg her bread" than live with a "Democratic nigger."

The "Compromise" of 1877

Threats, violence, and bloodshed accompanied the elections of 1876 in the South, but the national results were confusing and contradictory. Samuel Tilden, the Democratic presidential candidate, won the popular vote by more than 250,000 and had a large lead—185 to 167—over Republican Rutherford B. Hayes in the electoral vote. The 20 remaining electoral votes were in dispute. Both Democrats and Republicans claimed to have won in Florida,



MAP 13-1 DATES OF READMISSION OF SOUTHERN STATES TO THE UNION AND REESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONTROL

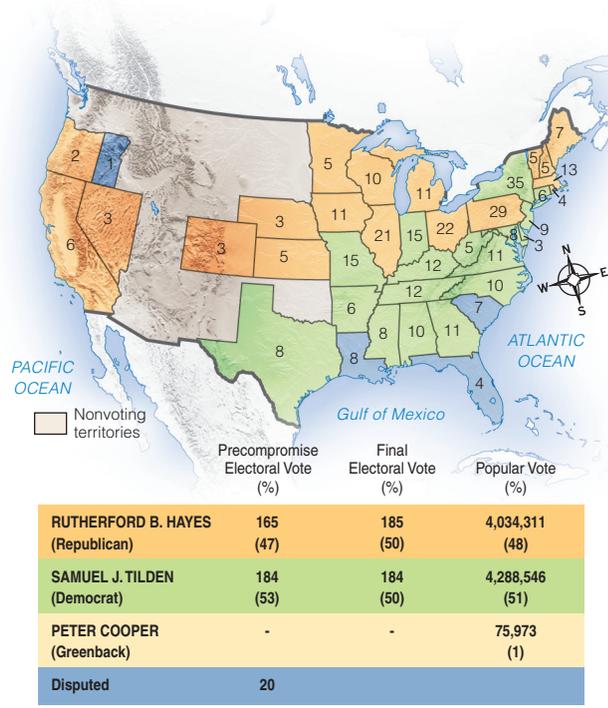
Once conservative white Democrats regained political control of a state government from black and white Republicans, they considered that state "redeemed." The first states the Democrats "redeemed" were Georgia, Virginia, and North Carolina. Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina were the last. (Tennessee was not included in the Reconstruction process under the terms of the 1867 Reconstruction Act.)

In which states did black and white Republicans hold political control for the shortest and longest periods of time?

Ellenton Massacre Between 30 and 100 African Americans were killed by marauding white men in September 1876 in Aiken County, South Carolina, after an alleged assault by a black man on an elderly white woman.

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 Watch on MyHistoryLab Video: The Compromise of 1877



MAP 13-2 THE ELECTION OF 1876

Although Democrat Samuel Tilden appeared to have won the election of 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes and the Republicans were able to claim victory after a prolonged political and constitutional controversy involving the disputed Electoral College votes from Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina (and one from Oregon). In an informal settlement in 1877, Democrats agreed to accept electoral votes for Hayes from those states, and Republicans agreed to permit those states to be “redeemed” by the Democrats. The result was to leave the entire South under the political control of conservative white Democrats. For the first time since 1867, black and white Republicans no longer effectively controlled any former Confederate state.

What factors explain the loss of political power by southern Republicans?

Compromise of 1877 This informal arrangement between national Democrats and Republicans settled the disputed presidential election of 1876 by permitting Republican Rutherford B. Hayes to become president while allowing Democrats to complete redemption by taking political control of Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina.

even Radical Republicans grew weary of intervening in southern affairs and became convinced again that black men and women were their inferiors and were not prepared to participate in government. Reconstruction, they concluded, had been a mistake.

Furthermore, black and white Republicans hurt themselves by indulging in fraud and corruption and by engaging in angry and divisive factionalism. But even if Republicans had been honest and united, white southern Democrats would never have accepted black people as worthy to participate in the political system.

Southern Democrats would accept black people in politics only if Democrats could control black voters. But black voters understood this, rejected control by former slave owners, and were loyal to the Republican Party—as flawed as it was.

As grim a turn as life may have taken for black people by 1877, it would get even worse in the decades that followed.

Louisiana, and South Carolina, the last three southern states that had not been redeemed. (There was also one contested vote from Oregon.) Unless Hayes managed to capture all 20 electoral votes of the three contested states (and Oregon), Tilden would be the next president (see Map 13-2).

The constitutional crisis over the outcome of the 1876 election was not resolved until shortly before Inauguration Day in March 1877. An informal understanding known as the **Compromise of 1877** ended the dispute. Democrats accepted a Hayes victory, but Hayes let southern Democrats know he would not support Republican governments in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina. In 1877 Hayes withdrew the last federal troops from the South, and the Republican administration in those states collapsed. Democrats immediately took control.

Redemption was now complete. White Democrats controlled each of the former Confederate states. Henry Adams, a black leader from Louisiana, explained what had happened: “The whole South—every state in the South had got into the hands of the very men that held us as slaves.”

CONCLUSION

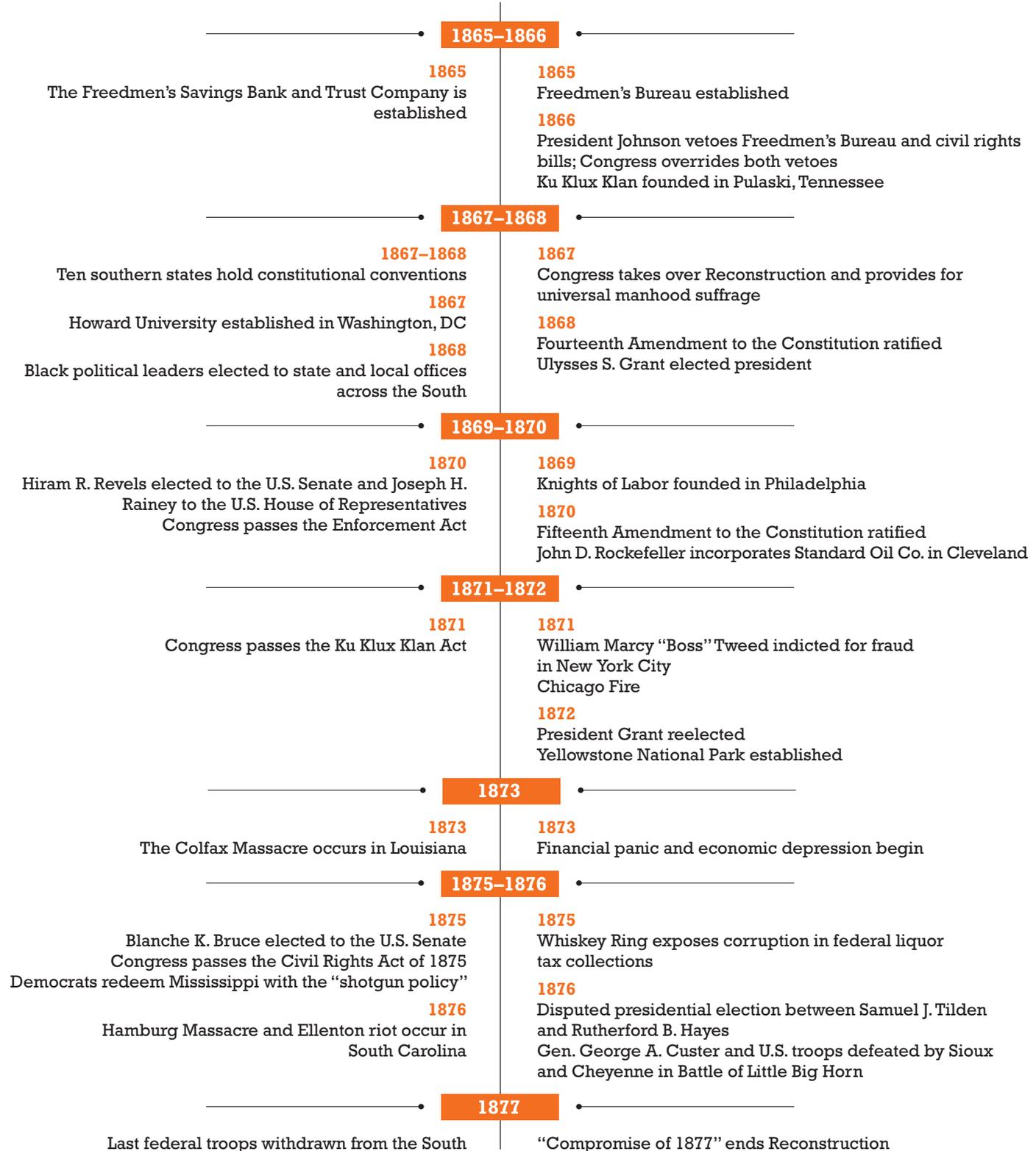
The glorious hopes that emancipation and the Union victory in the Civil War had aroused among African Americans in 1865 appeared forlorn by 1877. To be sure, black people were no longer slave laborers or property. They lived in tightly knit families that white people no longer controlled. They had established hundreds of schools, churches, and benevolent societies. The Constitution now endowed them with freedom, citizenship, and the right to vote. Some black people had even acquired land.

But no one can characterize Reconstruction as a success. The epidemic of terror and violence made it one of the bloodiest eras in American history. Thousands of black people had been beaten, raped, and murdered since 1865 simply because they had acted as free people. Too many white people were determined that black people could not and would not have the same rights that white people enjoyed. White southerners would not tolerate either the presence of black men in politics or white Republicans who accepted black political involvement. Most white northerners and

CHAPTER TIMELINE

AFRICAN-AMERICAN EVENTS

NATIONAL EVENTS



On MyHistoryLab



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What issues most concerned black political leaders during Reconstruction?
2. What did black political leaders accomplish and fail to accomplish during Reconstruction? What contributed to their successes and failures?
3. Were black political leaders unqualified to hold office so soon after the end of slavery?
4. To what extent did African Americans dominate southern politics during Reconstruction? Should this era be referred to as “Black Reconstruction”?
5. Why did the Republican Party fail to maintain control of southern state governments during Reconstruction?
6. What was “redemption”? What happened when redemption occurred? What factors contributed to redemption?
7. How and why did Reconstruction end?
8. How effective was Reconstruction in assisting black people to move from slavery to freedom? How effective was it in restoring the southern states to the Union?

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RETRACING THE ODYSSEY

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Wilberforce University and the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, Wilberforce, Ohio. Wilberforce University opened in 1856 and was named after English abolitionist William Wilberforce. The African Methodist Episcopal Church took over the school in 1863. It contains exhibits, an art gallery, and a theater, and has a picnic area.

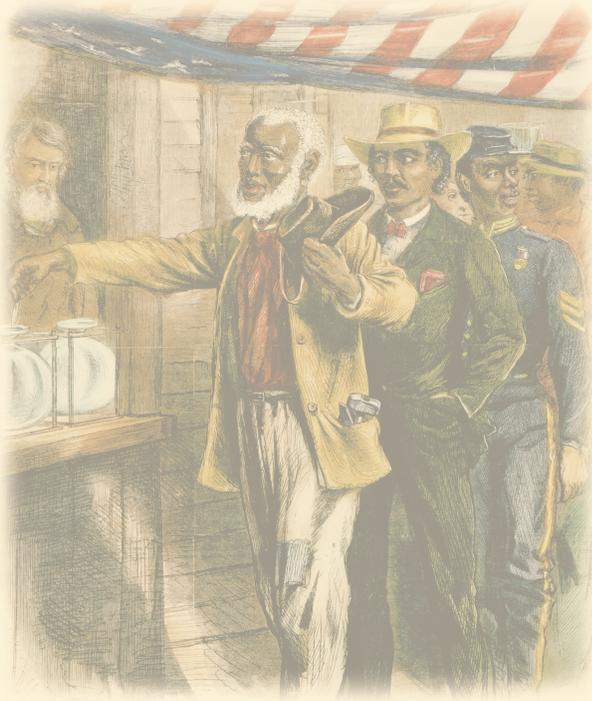
Union Bank Building, Tallahassee, Florida. For a time during Reconstruction, a branch of the Freedmen's Savings and Trust

Company was located here. The building, constructed in 1840, originally served as a planters' bank. It is currently part of the Museum of Florida History and includes its African-American History teacher in-service program.

The Robert Smalls Home, Beaufort, South Carolina. The Civil War hero and black political leader bought this house in 1863. He had lived on the premises as a slave, and it remained in his hands until his death in 1915. (The former Smalls house is a privately owned dwelling today.)

CONNECTING THE PAST

Voting and Politics



THE FIFTEENTH AMENDMENT TO THE CONSTITUTION, ratified in 1870, explicitly states that the right “to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” Why then was it necessary for Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965?

Race and the right to vote have been volatile issues since the creation of the American republic. The Founding Fathers betrayed a deep mistrust of permitting white men to vote who lacked education and had no stake in society through the possession of property or wealth. Slaves could not vote. Women were disfranchised. But in the late 1700s, a few free black men in the Northeastern states of Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont did vote. In the early nineteenth century, however, as the political system became more democratic for white men, black men in Pennsylvania and Connecticut—and most black men in New York—lost the right to vote.

Following the Civil War, white Southerners and northern Democrats were outraged when Republicans in Congress granted black men the right to vote through Reconstruction legislation and the Fifteenth Amendment. As southern Democrats “redeemed” the former Confederate states, they systematically disfranchised black voters and evaded the Fifteenth Amendment.

To do this, they devised a variety of schemes. Among them were the poll tax, the literacy test, and a requirement that illiterate men could vote only if they could “understand” the Constitution. Several southern states also adopted the grandfather clause, which stipulated that only men who were eligible to vote before 1867 or had fathers or grandfathers who were eligible to vote at that time would be eligible to vote in the late nineteenth century. Violence and intimidation were also used to “persuade” black men and their white allies that they did not want to vote. The U.S. Supreme Court acquiesced in disfranchisement by narrowly defining voting rights for African Americans in a series of cases in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that nullified the Fifteenth Amendment. In tortured logic in one of these cases, Chief Justice Morrison Waite declared that, “The Fifteenth Amendment does not confer the right of suffrage upon anyone.” Instead, he claimed, “It prevents the States, or United States, however, from giving preference . . . to one citizen of the United States over another, on account of race, color or previous condition of servitude.”

By the early twentieth century, Democrats and Republicans began to hold primary elections to nominate party candidates to run in the general election. Southern Democrats took advantage of this innovation to limit membership in the Democratic Party to white men—and later white women. Only members of the Democratic Party were eligible to vote in the Democratic primary. Because the Republican Party had all but ceased to exist in the

South after Reconstruction and rarely ran candidates for statewide offices, victory in the Democratic primary meant victory in the fall election. Black voters who could still vote in the general election found it a meaningless gesture because the “real” election had been the Democratic primary.

As black men and women migrated North and West in the early and mid-twentieth century, they were able to vote in their new communities. Their increasing political strength enabled them to elect black men and women to local and state offices. They also elected black men from northern cities, including Oscar DePriest, Robert Nix, Adam Clayton Powell, and Charles Diggs, to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. With the New Deal in the 1930s, black voters began to support Democratic candidates as they abandoned their longstanding loyalty to the Republican Party.

In turn, the Democratic Party increasingly relied on those black voters to support their presidential candidates such as Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harry S Truman, and John F. Kennedy. In the meantime, the Supreme Court declared the grandfather clause unconstitutional in 1915 and outlawed the South’s white Democratic primary elections in 1944.

During the Civil Rights movement and with unrelenting pressure from President Lyndon B. Johnson, northern Democrats and Republicans in Congress passed—over the bitter opposition of southern Democrats—the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The Voting Rights Act authorized the U.S. Department of Justice to dispatch federal registrars to states and communities that had a history of suppressing voting rights. As a result, the number of black voters and then black officeholders expanded exponentially across the South.

Yet voting rights still is not a dead issue. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, the Republican Party launched a campaign in 30 states to require voter photo identification at the polls. If implemented, the requirement for government-issued identification will adversely affect poorer voters who lack such documentation—especially African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans.



1. Who should be denied the right to vote? Why?

2. To prevent fraud, should voters be required to present photo identification to cast a ballot?

PART IV SEARCHING FOR SAFE SPACES

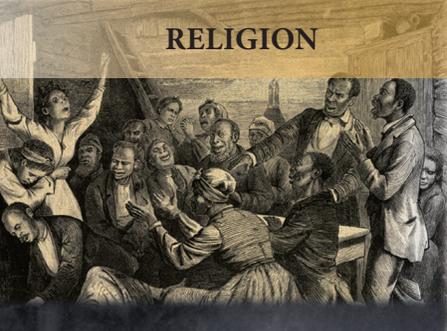
W. C. Handy



1860–1900

1900–1910

RELIGION



- 1880s–1890s** Holiness Movement and Pentecostal churches spread among African Americans
- 1854** James A. Healey ordained first African-American Roman Catholic priest in Paris
- 1890** Baptist churches count 1,300,000 southern black members, making them the largest African-American denomination

CULTURE



- 1887** Black players banned from major league baseball
- 1890s–1920s** Emergence of jazz and the blues among southern blacks
- 1899** Scott Joplin writes the “Maple Leaf Rag”
- 1900** James W. Johnson writes “Lift Every Voice and Sing”

- 1901** Booker T. Washington publishes *Up from Slavery*
- 1903** W. E. B. Du Bois publishes *The Souls of Black Folk*
- 1905** The *Defender* begins publication in Chicago
- 1908** Jack Johnson wins heavyweight championship in boxing

POLITICS & GOVERNMENT



- 1869–1889** Four black regiments stationed on the Western frontier
- 1881** First Jim Crow law segregates trains in Tennessee
- 1882** South Carolina begins to disfranchise black voters
- 1892** Populist Party attracts many black voters
- 1896** *Plessy v. Ferguson* upholds “separate but equal” doctrine of racial segregation
- 1898** First black officers command black troops in the Spanish-American War
- 1899–1901** George H. White serves as the South’s last black congressman to be elected until 1972

SOCIETY & ECONOMY



- 1867** Independent Order of St. Luke founded
- 1868** Hampton Institute founded
- 1870** Howard University Law School founded
- 1881** Tuskegee Institute founded
- 1886** Washington County, Texas, race riot
- 1887** National Colored Farmers’ Alliance formed
- 1892** 155 African Americans lynched in the United States
- 1895** Booker T. Washington addresses the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta
- 1896** National Association of Colored Women founded

- 1903** St. Luke Penny Savings Bank established in Richmond
- 1904** Boule (Sigma Pi Phi) formed
- 1905** Niagara Movement begins
- 1906** Brownsville Affair
Atlanta riot
- 1908** Springfield riot
National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses founded
- 1909** NAACP established

Zora
Neale Hurston



Countee
Cullen



Anna Julia Cooper



1910–1920

1920–1940

Noteworthy Individuals

- 1914 President Woodrow Wilson defends racial segregation
- 1917–1918 Over 1,000 black men serve as officers in World War I

- 1910 Urban League founded
- Negro Fellowship League founded
- 1914 Universal Negro Improvement Association founded
- 1915 Reemergence of the Ku Klux Klan
- 1917 East St. Louis riot
- Houston riot
- 1919 Chicago riot
- Elaine, Arkansas, riot
- Pan-African Congress meets in Paris
- Marcus Garvey founds the Black Star Line

- 1920 Baseball's Negro League organized
- 1922 Claude McKay publishes *Harlem Shadows*
- 1924 Jessica R. Faucet publishes *There Is Confusion*
- 1925 Countee Cullen publishes *Color*
- Alain Locke publishes *The New Negro*
- 1926 Carter Woodson organizes Negro History Week
- Langston Hughes publishes *The Weary Blues*
- 1927 James W. Johnson publishes *God's Trombones*
- 1928 Duke Ellington debuts at the Cotton Club
- Claude McKay publishes *Home to Harlem*
- 1929 Fats Waller's "Ain't Misbehavin'" opens on Broadway
- 1930 James W. Johnson publishes *Black Manhattan*
- 1933 James W. Johnson publishes his autobiography *Along the Way*
- 1937 Zora Neale Hurston publishes *Their Eyes Were Watching God*

- 1920 Nineteenth Amendment grants female suffrage with support from black women
- 1927 *Nixon v. Herndon* strikes down the white primary laws

- 1925 National Bar Association founded
- A. Philip Randolph founds the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters

- George H. White** (1852–1918)
- Booker T. Washington** (1856–1915)
- Johnson C. Whittaker** (1858–1931)
- Anna Julia Cooper** (1858–1964)
- Ida Wells Barnett** (1862–1931)
- Mary Church Terrell** (1863–1954)
- C. J. Walker** (1867–1919)
- Scott Joplin** (1868–1917)
- W. E. B. Du Bois** (1868–1963)
- William J. Seymour** (1870–1922)
- James W. Johnson** (1871–1938)
- W. C. Handy** (1873–1958)
- Carter Woodson** (1875–1950)
- Jack Johnson** (1878–1946)
- Gertrude "Ma" Rainey** (1886–1939)
- Marcus Garvey** (1887–1940)
- A. Philip Randolph** (1889–1979)
- Jelly Roll Morton** (1890–1941)
- Claude McKay** (1890–1948)
- Bessie Smith** (1894–1937)
- Jean Toomer** (1894–1962)
- Florence Mills** (1895–1927)
- Paul Robeson** (1898–1976)
- Duke Ellington** (1899–1974)
- Zora Neale Hurston** (1901–1960)
- Langston Hughes** (1902–1967)
- Countee Cullen** (c. 1903–1946)
- Fats Waller** (1904–1943)

14

1877–1895

White Supremacy Triumphant: African Americans in the Late Nineteenth Century

 Listen to Chapter 14
on MyHistoryLab

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 14-1 How important were African Americans in the political system in the late 1800s after Reconstruction ended?
- 14-2 What methods were employed to disfranchise black voters?
- 14-3 How, where, and why did segregation of the races begin?
- 14-4 What were the rules of “racial etiquette”?
- 14-5 Why were African Americans the victims of such extensive brutality and violence in the South?
- 14-6 Why did relatively small numbers of African Americans begin to leave the South?
- 14-7 What economic situation did large numbers of African Americans find themselves caught up in across the South in the late nineteenth century?
- 14-8 How just was the legal system for black people in the South?

The supremacy of the white race of the South must be maintained forever, and the domination of the negro race resisted at all points and at all hazards—because the white race is the superior race. This is the declaration of no new truth. It has abided forever in the marrow of our bones, and shall run forever with the blood that feeds Anglo-Saxon hearts.

Henry Grady, editor of the Atlanta Constitution, 1887

I remember a crowd of white men who rode up on horseback with rifles on their shoulders. I was with my father when they rode up, and I remember starting to cry. They cursed my father, drew their guns and made him salute, made him take off his hat and bow down to them several times. Then they rode away. I was not yet five years old, but I have never forgotten them.

Benjamin E. Mays on his childhood in Epworth, South Carolina, in 1898

Black people struggled against a rising tide of white supremacy in the late nineteenth century. White southerners—and most white northerners—had long been convinced that as a race they were superior to black people intellectually and culturally. They were certain that black people—because of their inferiority—could play only a subservient role in society. During slavery, white southerners had taken that subservience for granted. With slavery’s end, black people had allied themselves with radical Republicans during Reconstruction and challenged white supremacy as they became citizens and participated in the political system. The federal government established and enforced—although unevenly—the rights of all citizens to enjoy equal protection of the law and due process of law. But the commitment of the Republicans and the federal government wavered, waned, and then collapsed by the mid-1870s.

The Moses Speese family acquired a homestead near Westerville in Custer County, Nebraska. This 1888 photograph shows the extended family assembled in front of their sod house. They have installed a windmill to provide power to pump water from a well. They also possess two teams of horses.



With vivid recollections of the Civil War receding by the late 1800s, antagonism lessened between white southerners and white northerners. Many northern white people had previously expressed considerable sympathy for former slaves and bitter hostility toward southern rebels. But white Americans increasingly came to remember the Civil War less as a conflict directly involving the destiny of four million African Americans and more as a war that was marked by the terrible sacrifices and losses endured by white people. The same white Americans were increasingly preoccupied with the frontier West and with the Industrial Revolution that was transforming American society.

Congress, the president, and especially the Supreme Court abandoned the commitment to protect African Americans' civil and legal rights. Political and judicial leaders embraced a laissez-faire approach to social and economic issues. The government would keep its hands off the expanding railroad, steel, and petroleum industries. Neither would government intervene to safeguard the rights of black citizens. The Supreme Court interpreted the Fourteenth Amendment to protect corporations from government regulation, but it failed to protect the basic rights of black people.

As a result, the conservative white Democrats who had regained power in the South were no more than mildly fearful that the U.S. government or Republicans would intrude as white authority expanded over the lives of southern African Americans in the late nineteenth century. Between 1875 and 1900, black people in the South were gradually excluded from politics, segregated in public life, and denied equal—even basic—rights. They were forced to behave in a demeaning and deferential manner to white people. Most of them were limited to menial agricultural and domestic jobs that left them poor and dependent on white landowners and merchants. They were often raped, lynched, and beaten. Southern justice was systematically unjust.

Unwilling and unable to tolerate such conditions, some African Americans left the South for Africa or the American West. However, most black people remained in the South, where many acquired a semblance of education, some managed to purchase land, and a few even prospered.

Politics

14-1 How important were African Americans in the political system in the late 1800s after Reconstruction ended?

In the late nineteenth century, black people remained important in southern politics. Black men served in Congress, state legislatures, and local governments. They received federal patronage appointments to post offices and custom houses. But as southern Democrats steadily disfranchised black voters in the 1880s and 1890s, the number of black politicians declined until the political system was virtually all white by 1900 (see Figure 14-1).

When Reconstruction ended in 1877 and the last Republican state governments collapsed, black men who held major state offices were forced out. In South Carolina, Lieutenant Governor Richard H. Gleaves resigned under protest in 1877: “I desire to place on record, in the most public and unqualified manner, my sense of the great wrong which

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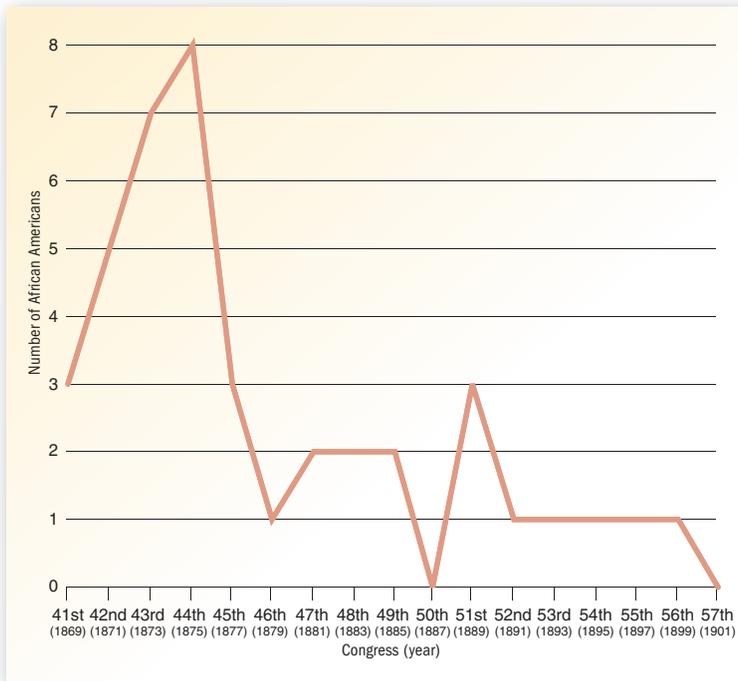


FIGURE 14-1 AFRICAN-AMERICAN REPRESENTATION IN CONGRESS, 1867-1900

Black men served in the U.S. Congress from Joseph Rainey's election in 1870 until George H. White's term concluded in 1901. All were Republicans.

thus forces me practically to abandon rights conferred on me, as I fully believe by a majority of my fellow citizens of this State."

For a time, some conservative white Democrats accepted limited black participation in politics as long as no black leader had power over white people and black participation did not challenge white domination. South Carolina's Governor Wade Hampton even assured black people that he respected their rights and would appoint qualified black men to minor offices. Hampton condescendingly told black people in 1878, "We propose to protect you and give you all your rights; but while we do this you cannot expect that we should discriminate in your favor, and say because you are a colored man, you have the right to rule the State. We say to you that we intend to take the best men we can find to represent the State, and you must qualify yourselves to do so before you can expect to be chosen."

Paternalistic Democrats like Hampton did appoint black men to lower-level positions. Hampton, for example, appointed Richard Gleaves and Martin Delany as trial justices. In turn, some black men supported the Democrats. A few black Democrats were elected to state legislatures in the 1880s. Some had been Democrats throughout Reconstruction. Others had abandoned the Republicans.

Most black voters, however, remained loyal Republicans even though the party had become a hollow shell of what it had been during Reconstruction. Its few white sup-

porters usually shunned black Republicans. The party rarely fielded candidates for statewide elections, limiting itself to local races in regions where Republicans remained strong.

Black Congressmen

Democrats created oddly shaped congressional districts to confine much of the black population of a state to one district, such as Mississippi's third, South Carolina's seventh, Virginia's fourth, and North Carolina's second. A black Republican usually represented these districts, while the rest of the state elected white Democrats to Congress. This diluted black voting strength and reduced the number of white people represented by a black congressman. Thus Henry Cheatham and George H. White of North Carolina, John Mercer Langston of Virginia, and Thomas E. Miller of South Carolina were elected to the House of Representatives long after Reconstruction ended (see Table 14-1).

But these black men wielded only limited power in Washington. They could not persuade their white colleagues to enact significant legislation to benefit their black constituents. They did, however, get Republican presidents to appoint black people to federal positions in their districts—including post offices and custom houses—and they denounced the plight of African Americans. George H. White, for example, rebuked white leaders for their readiness to label black people as inferior while denying them the means to prove otherwise: "It is rather hard to be accused of shiftlessness and idleness when the accuser . . . closes the avenues for labor and industrial pursuits to us. It is hardly fair to accuse us of ignorance when it was made a crime under the former order of things to learn enough about letters to even read the Word of God."

Democrats and Farmer Discontent

Black involvement in southern politics survived Reconstruction, but it did not survive the nineteenth century. Divisions within the Democratic Party and the rise of a new political

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TABLE 14-1 BLACK MEMBERS OF THE U.S. CONGRESS, 1860-1901

Dates	Name	State	Occupation	Prewar Status
1. 1870-1879	Joseph H. Rainey	South Carolina	Barber	Slave, then free
2. 1870-1873	Jefferson Long	Georgia	Tailor, storekeeper	Slave
3. 1870-1873	Hiram Revels*	Mississippi	Barber, minister, teacher, college president	Free
4. 1871-1877	Josiah T. Walls	Florida	Editor, planter, teacher, lawyer	Slave
5. 1871-1873	Benjamin Turner	Alabama	Businessman, farmer, merchant	Slave
6. 1871-1873	Robert C. DeLarge	South Carolina	Tailor	Free
7. 1871-1875	Robert B. Elliott	South Carolina	Lawyer	Free
8. 1873-1879	Richard H. Cain	South Carolina	African Methodist Episcopal minister	Free
9. 1873-1875	Alonzo J. Ransier	South Carolina	Shipping clerk, editor	Free
10. 1873-1875	James T. Rapier	Alabama	Planter, editor, lawyer, teacher	Free
11. 1873-1877, 1882-1883	John R. Lynch	Mississippi	Planter, lawyer, photographer	Slave
12. 1875-1881	Blanche K. Bruce*	Mississippi	Planter, teacher, editor	Slave
13. 1875-1877	Jeremiah Haralson	Alabama	Minister	Slave
14. 1875-1877	John A. Hyman	North Carolina	Storekeeper, farmer	Slave
15. 1875-1877	Charles E. Nash	Louisiana	Mason, cigar maker	Free
16. 1875-1887	Robert Smalls	South Carolina	Ship pilot, editor	Slave
17. 1883-1887	James E. O'Hara	North Carolina	Lawyer	Free
18. 1889-1893	Henry P. Cheatham	North Carolina	Lawyer, teacher	Slave
19. 1889-1891	Thomas E. Miller	South Carolina	Lawyer, college president	Free
20. 1889-1891	John M. Langston	Virginia	Lawyer	Free
21. 1893-1897	George W. Murray	South Carolina	Teacher, farmer	Slave
22. 1897-1901	George H. White	North Carolina	Lawyer	Slave

*Revels and Bruce served in the Senate. The 20 remaining black legislators served in the House.

party—the Populists—accompanied successful efforts to remove black people entirely from southern politics.

Militant Democrats opposed the more paternalistic conservatives who took charge after Reconstruction. For the militants, these redeemers seemed too willing to tolerate limited black participation in politics while showing little interest in the needs of white yeoman farmers. Dissatisfied independents, “readjusters,” and other disaffected white people resented the domination of the Democratic Party by former planters, wealthy businessmen, and lawyers who often favored limited government and reduced state support for schools, asylums, orphanages, and prisons while encouraging industry and railroads. Nor did the redeemer and paternalistic Democrats always agree among themselves. Some favored agricultural education, boards of health, and even separate colleges for black students. This disunity permitted insurgent Democrats and even Republicans to exploit economic and racial issues to undermine Democratic solidarity.

Many farmers felt betrayed as the Industrial Revolution transformed society. They fed and clothed America, but large corporations, banks, and railroads dominated economic life. Wealth was concentrated in the hands of big industrialists and financiers. Farmers were no longer self-sufficient, admired for hard work and self-reliance. They now depended on banks for loans, were exploited when they bought and sold goods, and were at the mercy of railroads when they shipped their commodities. As businessmen got richer, farmers got poorer.

A sharp decline in the price of cotton between 1865 and 1890 hurt small independent (yeomen) farmers in the South. Many lost their land and were forced into tenant farming and sharecropping. By 1890 most farmers in the Deep South, black and white, worked land they did not own.

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Colored Farmers' Alliance A large organization of black southern farmers in the 1880s and 1890s that had as many as one million members who agitated for improved conditions and income for black landowners, renters, and sharecroppers.

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Populist Party Also known as the Peoples' Party, the Populists supported inflation; the free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold; government ownership of railroads, telephone, and telegraph companies; and an eight-hour workday. They won state and congressional elections but lost the presidential contests in 1892 and 1896.

In response to their woes, farmers organized. In the 1870s they formed the Patrons of Husbandry, or Grange. Initially a fraternal organization, the Grange promoted economic cooperatives and political involvement. Grangers especially favored government regulation of the rates railroads charged to transport crops. By the 1880s, many hard-pressed farmers turned to Farmers' Alliances, which soon spread from the South into the Midwest and Great Plains. These organizations favored railroad regulation, currency inflation (to increase crop prices and reduce debt), and support for agricultural education. By 1888 many of them joined in the National Farmers' Alliance.

The Colored Farmers' Alliance

The alliances, however, were conservative on racial issues and did not challenge the racial status quo. Excluded from the Southern Alliance, black farmers formed their own **Colored Farmers' Alliance**, which expanded across the South and became one of the largest black organizations in American history. When the white alliances met in St. Louis in 1889, so did the black alliance—in a separate convention. The alliances maintained strict racial distinctions but promised to cooperate to resolve their economic woes.

However, black and white alliance members did not always see their economic difficulties from the same perspective. Some white farmers owned the land that the black farmers lived on and worked. Black men saw their alliance as a way of getting a political education. In 1891, 16 black men organized a branch of the Colored Farmers' Alliance in St. Landry Parish in Louisiana. Their purpose was to help their race and their families and acquire enough information to vote effectively: "This organization is for the purpose of trying to elevate our race, to make us better citizens, better husbands, better fathers and sons, to educate ourselves so that we may be able to vote more intelligently on questions that are of vital importance to our people."

But white people were not certain they wanted black men to vote at all—intelligently or otherwise—and they opposed electing black men to office. Paradoxically, they also encouraged black men to vote as long as the black voters supported candidates the alliances backed. By the late 1880s, alliance-backed candidates in the South were elected to state legislatures, to Congress, and to four governorships.

The Populist Party

By 1892 many alliance members threw their political support to a new political party—the People's Party—generally known as the **Populist Party**. Convinced that neither the Democrats nor the Republicans cared about American farmers and industrial workers, the Populists hoped to wrestle control of the economy from bankers, industrialists, and their allies in the traditional parties and let the "people" shape the country's destiny. The Populists wanted the federal government to take over railroad, telegraph, and telephone companies and to operate a loan and marketing program, known as the subtreasury system, to benefit farmers. They urged southern white men to abandon the Democrats and southern black men to reject the Republicans and unite politically to support the Populists.

The foremost proponent of black and white political unity was Thomas Watson of Georgia. He and other Populist leaders believed economic and political cooperation could transcend racial differences. During the 1892 presidential campaign, Watson explained that black and white farmers faced the same economic exploitation, but that they failed to cooperate with each other because of race:

The white tenant lives adjoining the colored tenant. Their homes are almost equally destitute of comforts. Their living is confined to bare necessities. They are equally burdened with heavy taxes. They pay the same high rent for gullied and impoverished land. . . .

Now the Peoples' Party says to these two men, You are kept apart that you may be separately fleeced of your earnings. You are made to hate each other because upon that hatred is rested the keystone of the arch of financial despotism which enslaves you both. You are deceived and blinded that you may not see how this race antagonism perpetuates a monetary system which beggars both.

Watson, however, was not calling for improved race relations. He opposed economic exploitation that was disguised by race; however, when Democrats accused him of promoting racial reconciliation, he bluntly supported segregation to a black audience:

They say I am an advocate of social equality between the whites and the blacks. THAT IS AN ABSOLUTE FALSEHOOD, and the man who utter[s] it knows it, I have done no such thing, and you colored men know it as well as the men who formulated the slander. It is best for your race and my race that we dwell apart in our private affairs. It is best for you to go to your churches, and I will go to mine; it is best that you send your children to the colored school, and I'll send my children to mine; you invite your colored friends to your home, and I'll invite my friends to mine.

Watson eventually became a racial demagogue who thoroughly supported white supremacy. But in 1892 he desperately wanted black and white voters to support Populist candidates. The Populists lost the national election that year and again in 1896, although they did win several congressional and governor's races. Southern Democrats, outraged at the Populist appeal for black votes, resorted again to fraud and terror to prevail. When a biracial coalition of black and white Populists took control of Grimes County in east Texas in 1900, Democrats massacred first the black and then the white leaders.

Nor is it a coincidence that in the election of 1892, when the Democrats carried every southern state, there was an explosion of violence. Democrats were determined to destroy the Populist challenge. That year a record 235 people were lynched in the United States.

The Populist challenge heightened southern Democrats' fears that black voters could decide elections if the white vote split. But many black people were suspicious of the Populists and remained loyal to the Republicans. The Republican Party in the South, however, was much weaker than it had been during Reconstruction because many of its supporters could no longer vote. Years before the alliances and the Populists emerged, southern Democrats had begun to eliminate the black vote.

Disfranchisement

14-2 What methods were employed to disfranchise black voters?

As early as the late 1870s, southern Democrats worked to undermine black political power. Violence and intimidation, so effective during Reconstruction, continued in the 1880s and 1890s. Frightened, discouraged, or apathetic, many black men stopped voting. White landlords could sometimes intimidate or bribe black sharecroppers and renters not to vote or to vote for the landlord's candidates.

There was also simple injustice. In 1890 black Congressman Thomas E. Miller ran for reelection and won—or so he thought. But he was charged with using illegal ballots and declared the loser. He appealed to the South Carolina Supreme Court, which ruled that although his ballots were printed on the required white paper, it was “of a distinctly yellow tinge.” He did not return to Congress.

Evading the Fifteenth Amendment

More militant and determined southern Democrats were unwavering in their efforts to find some “legal” means to prevent black men from voting. However, the Fifteenth Amendment stated that the right to vote could not be denied on “account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”

White leaders worried that if they imposed what were then legally acceptable barriers to voting—literacy tests, poll taxes, and property qualifications—they would also disfranchise many white voters. But resourceful Democrats found ways around this problem. In 1882, for example, South Carolina passed the Eight Box Law, a primitive literacy test that required

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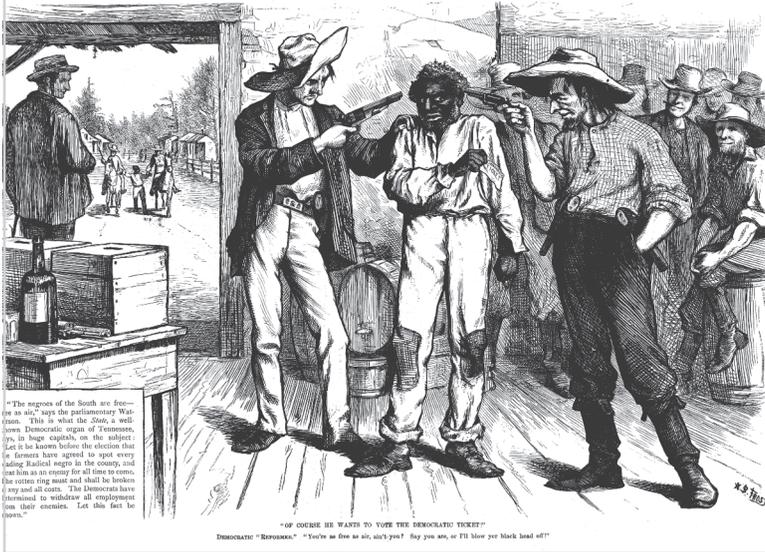
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Listen on MyHistoryLab Audio: A Republican Textbook for Colored Voters Excerpt



A rural black man “freely” exercises his right to vote. Notice the bottle of whiskey next to the ballot box.

voters to deposit separate ballots for separate election races in the proper ballot box. Illiterate voters could not identify the boxes unless white officials assisted them.

Mississippi

Mississippi made the most successful effort to eliminate black voters without openly violating the Fifteenth Amendment. Black men had continued to vote in Mississippi despite intimidation. In 1889 black leaders from 40 Mississippi counties protested the “violent and criminal suppression of the black vote.” In response, white men called a constitutional convention to do away with the black vote.

With a single black delegate and 134 white delegates, the convention adopted complex voting requirements that—without mentioning race—disfranchised black voters. Voting required proof of residency and payment of all taxes, including a \$2 poll tax. A person convicted of arson, bigamy, or petty theft—crimes the delegates associated with black people—could not vote. People convicted of so-called white crimes—murder, rape, and grand larceny—could vote.

The new Mississippi constitution also required voters to be literate, but illiterate men could still qualify to vote by demonstrating that they understood the constitution if it

was read to them. It was taken for granted that white voting registrars would accept almost all white applicants and fail black applicants seeking to register under this provision.

South Carolina

Black voting had been declining in South Carolina since the end of Reconstruction. In 1876, 91,870 black men voted. In 1888, only 13,740 did. Unhappy that even so few voters might decide an election, U.S. Senator Benjamin R. Tillman won approval for a constitutional convention in 1895. The convention followed Mississippi’s lead and created an “understanding clause,” but not without a protest from black leaders.

Six black men and 154 white men were elected to the South Carolina convention. Two of the black men—Robert Smalls and William Whipper (see Chapter 13)—had been delegates to the 1868 constitutional convention. The six black men protested black disfranchisement. Thomas E. Miller explained that the basic rights of citizens were at stake: “The Negroes do not want to dominate. They do not and would not have social equality, but they do want to cast a ballot for the men who make their laws and administer the laws. I stand here pleading for justice to a people whose rights are about to be taken away with one fell swoop.”

It was for naught. Black voters were disfranchised in South Carolina. White delegates did not even pretend that elections should be fair. William Henderson of Berkeley County admitted,

We don’t propose to have fair elections. We will get left at that every time. . . . I tell you, gentlemen, if we have fair elections in Berkeley we can’t carry it. There’s no use to talk about it. The black man is learning to read faster than the white man. And if he comes up and can read you have got to let him vote. Now are you going to throw it out. . . . We are perfectly disgusted with hearing so much about fair elections. Talk all around, but make it fair and you’ll see what’ll happen.

The Grandfather Clause

In 1898 Louisiana added a new twist to **disfranchisement**. Its **grandfather clause** stipulated that only men who had been eligible to vote before 1867—or whose father or grandfather had been eligible before that year—would be qualified to vote. Because virtually no black men had been eligible to vote before 1867—most had just emerged from slavery—the law

disfranchisement White southern Democrats devised a variety of techniques in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to prevent black people from voting. Those techniques included literacy tests, poll taxes, and the grandfather clause as well as intimidation and violence.

grandfather clause A method southern states used to disfranchise black men. It stipulated that only men whose grandfathers were eligible to vote were themselves eligible to vote. The U.S. Supreme Court invalidated the grandfather clause in 1915.

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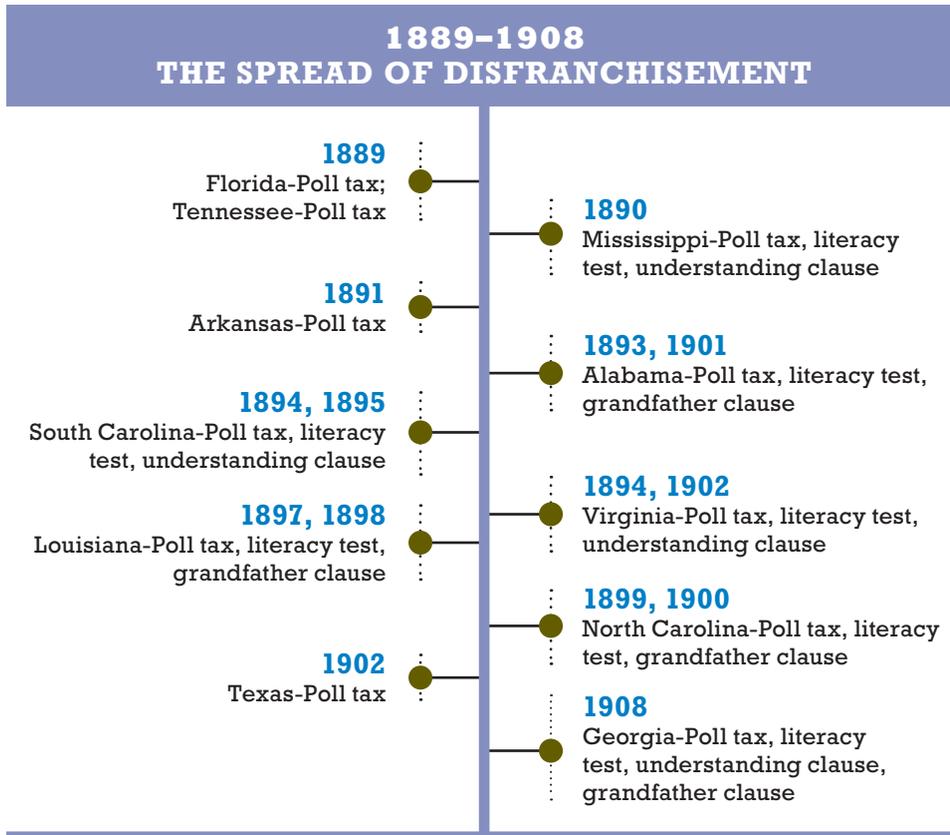
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Goldfield et al., *The American Journey* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004), 550.

immediately disfranchised almost all black voters. In Louisiana in 1896, 130,000 black men voted. In 1904, 1,342 voted.

Except for Kentucky and West Virginia, each southern state had enacted elaborate restrictions on voting by the 1890s. As a result, few black men continued to vote, and none were elected to office.

The “Force Bill”

Republicans in Congress in the meantime had made a final, futile attempt to protect black voting rights. In 1890 Massachusetts Congressman Henry Cabot Lodge introduced a bill to require federal supervision of elections in congressional districts where fraud and intimidation were alleged. White southerners were enraged and labeled it the “Force bill” because they believed—incorrectly—that it would force black rule over white people.

This **Federal Elections Bill** easily passed the House, but it failed in the Senate after a 33-day Democratic filibuster. That ended the last significant congressional attempt to protect black voting rights in the South until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965.

Federal Elections Bill A measure, also known as the Force bill, to protect the voting rights of black men in the South by providing federal supervision of elections. It passed in the House of Representatives but failed in the Senate.

Segregation

14-3 How, where, and why did segregation of the races begin?

When black attorney T. McCants Stewart visited Columbia, South Carolina, in 1885, he told readers of the *New York Age* that he had been pleasantly received and had encountered little discrimination: “I can ride in first class cars on the railroads and in the streets. I can go into saloons and get refreshments even as in New York. I can stop in and drink a glass of

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segregation The separation of people based on their race in the use of such public facilities as hotels, restaurants, restrooms, drinking fountains, parks, and auditoriums. In many instances segregation meant the exclusion of black people.

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Jim Crow “Jump Jim Crow” was a nineteenth-century dance ridiculing black people that was transformed by the twentieth century into a term meaning racial discrimination and segregation.

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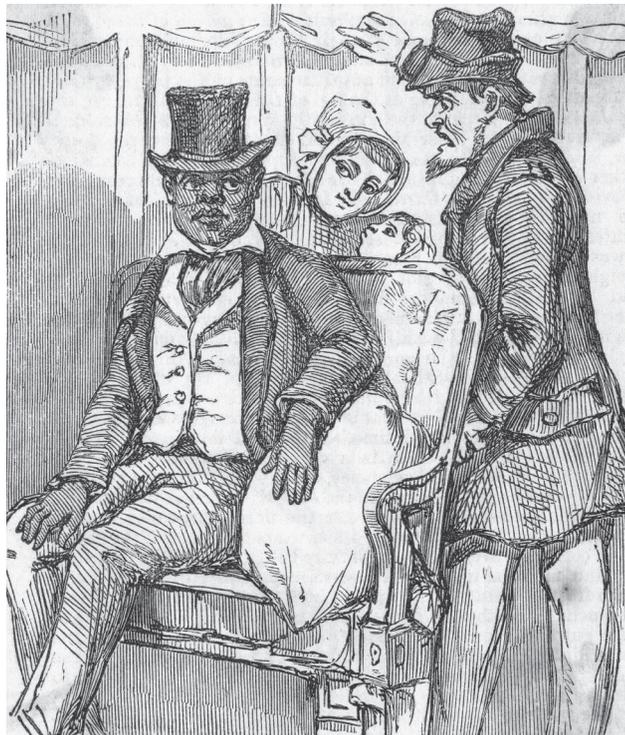
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To enforce segregation on a railroad coach, a rather shabbily attired conductor evicts a well-dressed black man from a first-class coach so that he will not pose a danger to a white woman and her child.

soda and be more politely waited upon than in some parts of New England.” Stewart’s visit occurred before most segregation laws had been enacted. In fact, the word **segregation** was almost never used before the twentieth century.

Not that black and white people typically mingled freely in the 1880s and 1890s. They did not. Since Reconstruction, schools, hospitals, asylums, and cemeteries had been segregated. Many restaurants and hotels did not admit black people, and many black people did not venture where they felt unwelcome or were likely to meet hostility. But “Jim Crow” had not yet become legally embedded in southern life.

Jim Crow

The term **Jim Crow** originated with a minstrel show routine called “Jump Jim Crow” that a white performer, Thomas “Daddy” Rice, created in the 1830s and 1840s. Rice blackened his face with charcoal and ridiculed black people. How Rice’s character became synonymous with segregation and discrimination is unclear, but by the end of the nineteenth century Jim Crow and segregation were rapidly expanding in the South, greatly restricting the lives of African Americans.

In the decades following slavery’s demise, segregation evolved gradually as a way to enforce white domination. Many white southerners resented the presence of black people in public facilities, places of entertainment, and businesses. If black people were—as white southerners believed—a subordinate race, then their proximity in shops, in parks, and on trains suggested an unacceptable equality in public life.

Moreover, many black people acquiesced in some facets of racial separation. During Reconstruction, people of color formed their own churches and social organizations. Black people were more comfortable around people of their own race than they were among white people. Furthermore, black southerners often accepted separate seating in theaters, concert halls, and other facilities that had been previously closed to them. Segregation, they felt, was better than exclusion.

Segregation on the Railroads

Many white people particularly objected to the presence of black people in the first-class coaches of trains. Before segregation laws, white passengers and railroad conductors sometimes forced black people who had purchased first-class tickets into second-class coaches. In 1889 black Baptists from Savannah bought first-class tickets to travel to a convention in Indianapolis. News was telegraphed ahead, and a white mob threatened and beat them at a railroad stop in Georgia. A white man shoved a pistol into the breast of a black woman who had screamed in fear. He demanded, “You G-d d-n heffer, if you don’t hush your mouth and get out of here, I will blow your G-d d-n brains out.”

In another instance, a young black woman, Mary Church (later Mary Church Terrell), was traveling alone in a first-class coach when the conductor attempted to move her to the second-class car. She stayed but only after warning the conductor that she would send a telegram to her father telling him “you are forcing me to ride all night in a Jim Crow car. He will sue the railroad for compelling his daughter who has a first-class ticket to ride in a second-class car.”

The first segregation laws involved passenger trains. Despite the opposition of black politicians, the Tennessee legislature mandated segregation on railroad coaches in 1881. Florida passed a similar law in 1887. The railroads opposed these laws but not because they wanted to protect the rights of black people. Rather, they were concerned about the expense of maintaining separate cars or sections within cars for black and white people. Whether they could pay for a first-class ticket or not, most black passengers were confined to grimy second-class cars crowded with smoking and

tobacco-chewing black and white men. Hitched just behind the smoke-belching locomotive, these cars were filthy with soot and cinders.

Plessy v. Ferguson

In 1891 the Louisiana legislature required segregated trains within the state, despite opposition from a black organization, the American Citizens' Equal Rights Association of Louisiana, the state's 18 black legislators, and the railroads.

In a test case, black people challenged the law and hoped to demonstrate its absurdity by enlisting the support of a black man who was almost indistinguishable from a white person. In 1892 Homer A. Plessy bought a first-class ticket and attempted to ride on the coach designated for white people. Plessy, who was only one-eighth black, was arrested for violating the new law.

In the case—*Plessy v. Ferguson*—Plessy's lawyers argued that segregation deprived their client of equal protection of the law guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment. But in 1896 the Supreme Court, in an 8-to-1 decision, upheld Louisiana's segregation statute. Speaking for the majority, Justice Henry Brown ruled that the law, merely because it required separation of the races, did not deny Plessy his rights, nor did it imply he was inferior. The lone dissenter from this "separate but equal" doctrine, Justice John Marshall Harlan—whose father had owned slaves—likened the majority opinion to the *Dred Scott* decision 39 years earlier. Thus, with the complicity of the Supreme Court, the Fourteenth Amendment no longer afforded black Americans equal treatment under the law. After the *Plessy* decision, southern states and cities created an American apartheid—an elaborate system of racial separation.

Streetcar Segregation

Before the automobile, the electric streetcar was the primary form of public transportation in American cities and towns. Beginning with Georgia in 1891, states and cities across the South segregated these vehicles. In some communities, the streetcar companies had to operate separate cars for black and white passengers. In others, they designated separate sections within cars. The companies often resisted segregation, citing the expense of duplicating equipment and hiring more employees.

But black people were bitterly opposed to Jim Crow streetcars. During Reconstruction, they had fended off streetcar discrimination with boycotts and sit-ins. Thirty years later, they tried the same techniques. There were boycotts in at least 25 southern cities between 1891 and 1910. Black people refused to ride segregated cars in Atlanta, Augusta, Jacksonville, Montgomery, Mobile, Little Rock, and Columbia. The boycotts seriously hurt the streetcar companies, and segregation was briefly abandoned in Atlanta and Augusta.

Black people also attempted to form alternative transportation companies in Portsmouth and Norfolk, Virginia, and in Chattanooga and Nashville, Tennessee. In 1905 the black community in Nashville organized a black-owned bus company and committed \$25,000 to it. They purchased five buses, but the company failed after a few months.

Segregation Proliferates

Jim Crow proceeded inexorably. "White" and "colored" signs appeared in railroad stations, theaters, auditoriums, and restrooms, and over drinking fountains. Southern white people went to any length to keep black and white people apart. Courtrooms maintained separate Bibles for black and white witnesses "to swear to tell the truth." By 1915 Oklahoma mandated white and colored public telephone booths. New Orleans attempted to segregate customers of black and white prostitutes, but with mixed results.

Although *Plessy v. Ferguson* required "separate but equal" facilities for black and white people, when facilities were made available to black people, they were inferior to those afforded white people. Often, people of color were offered no facilities at all. They were simply excluded. Few hotels, restaurants, libraries, bowling alleys, public parks, amusement parks, swimming pools, golf courses, or tennis courts would admit black people. The only exceptions were black people who accompanied or assisted white people. For example, a black woman caring for a white child could visit a "white-only" public park with the child, but she dare not visit it with her own child.

 Watch on MyHistoryLab Video:
Plessy v. Ferguson

Plessy v. Ferguson In 1896, in an 8-to-1 decision, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation did not violate the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The "separate but equal" doctrine remained the supreme law of the land until the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision overturned *Plessy*.

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  Read on MyHistoryLab Document:
Plessy v. Ferguson Legalizes Segregation,
1896

VOICES Majority and Dissenting Opinions on *Plessy v. Ferguson*

The Supreme Court's 8-to-1 decision in Plessy v. Ferguson sanctioned legal segregation and opened the way for segregation laws throughout the South. The majority opinion ruled that segregation was constitutional so long as both races were provided equal facilities. In practice, of course, the facilities for African Americans were invariably inferior to those for white people.

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From Justice Henry Brown of Michigan's majority opinion:

The object of the [Fourteenth] amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but in the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either.

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We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by the reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it. . . . If the two races are to meet on terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other's merits and a voluntary consent of individuals. . . . Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions based upon physical differences. . . . If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane.

From Justice John Marshall Harlan of Kentucky, the lone dissent:

In my opinion, the judgment this day rendered will, in time, prove to be quite as pernicious as the decision made by this tribunal in the Dred Scott Case. . . . But it

seems that we have yet, in some of the states, a dominant race, a superior class of citizens, which assumes to regulate the enjoyment of civil rights, common to all citizens, upon the basis of race. The present decision, it may well be apprehended, will not only stimulate aggressions, more or less brutal and irritating, upon the admitted rights of colored citizens, but it will encourage the belief that it is possible, by means of state enactments, to defeat the beneficent purposes which the people of the United States had in view when they adopted the recent amendments of the Constitution, by one which the blacks of this country were made citizens of the United States and of the states in which they respectively reside and whose privileges and immunities, as citizens, the states are forbidden to abridge. . . . What can more certainly arouse race hate, what more certainly create and perpetuate a feeling of distrust between these races, than state enactments which in fact proceed on the ground that the colored citizens are so inferior and degraded that they cannot be allowed to sit in public coaches occupied by white citizens? . . . But in view of the Constitution, in the eyes of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our Constitution is color-blind, and neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens. In respect of civil rights, all citizens are equal before the law.

1. **What does Justice Brown mean when he distinguishes between political and social equality? How does his position compare to that of Congressmen Rapier and Elliott when they argued for civil rights in 1874? (see p. 329)**
2. **How does Justice Harlan counter the majority opinion?**

SOURCE: 163 U.S. 537 United States Reports: Cases Adjudged in the Supreme Court (New York: Banks and Brothers, 1896).

Racial Etiquette

14-4 What were the rules of "racial etiquette"?

During slavery, white people had insisted that black people act in a subservient manner. Such behavior made white dominance clear. After emancipation, white southerners sought to maintain that dominance through a pattern of racial etiquette that determined how black and white people dealt with each other in their day-to-day affairs.

Black and white people did not shake hands. Black people did not look white people in the eyes. They were supposed to stare at the ground when addressing white men and women. Black men removed their hats in the presence of white people. White men did not remove their hats in a black home or in the presence of a black woman. Black people went to the back door, not the front door, of a white house. A black man or boy was never to look at a white woman. A black man in Mississippi observed, “You couldn’t smile at a white woman. If you did you’d be hung from a limb.” Touching a white woman, even inadvertently, was a serious offense for a black man.

White customers were always served first, even if a black customer had been the first to arrive. Black women could not try on clothing in white businesses. White people did not use titles of respect—Mr., Mrs., Miss—when addressing black adults. They used first names, “boy” or “girl,” or sometimes even “nigger.” Older black people were sometimes called “auntie” or “uncle.” But black people were expected to use Mr., Mrs., or Miss when addressing white people, including adolescents. “Boss” or “cap’n” might do for a white man.

Violence

14-5 Why were African Americans the victims of such extensive brutality and violence in the South?

The late nineteenth-century South was a violent place. Political and mob violence, so prevalent during Reconstruction, continued unabated into the 1880s and 1890s as Democrats often used force to drive the dwindling number of black and white Republicans out of politics.

Washington County, Texas

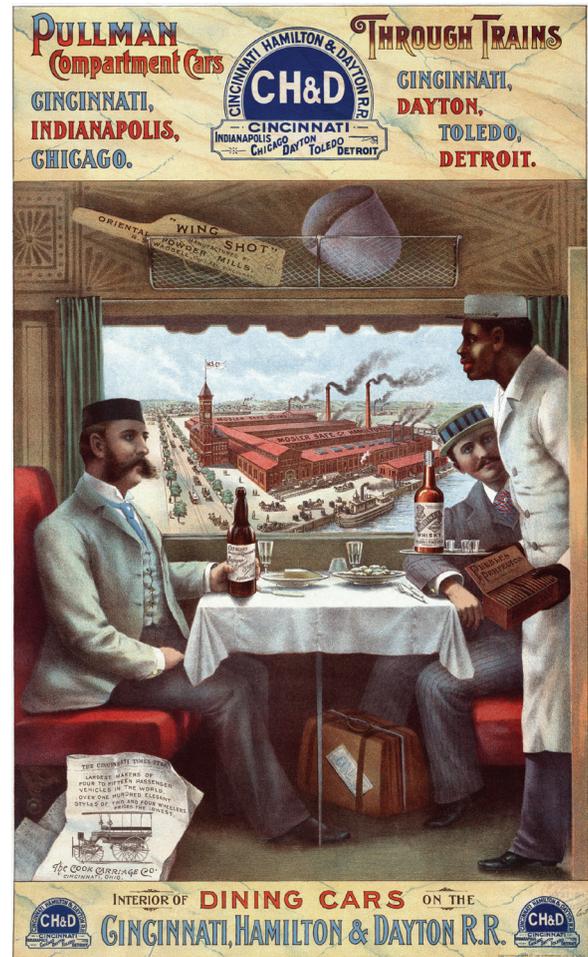
In 1886 in Washington County in Texas, Democrats were determined to keep the control they had won in 1884 through fraud. Masked Democrats tried to seize ballot boxes in a Republican precinct. But armed black men resisted and killed one of the white men. Eight black men were arrested. A mob of white men in disguise broke into the jail and lynched three of the black men. Three white Republicans fled but convinced federal authorities to investigate. The U.S. attorney twice tried to secure convictions for election fraud. The first trial ended in a hung jury, the second in acquittal. The white Democratic sheriff did not investigate the lynching. But the black man charged with the killing of a white man was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

The Phoenix Riot

In the tiny South Carolina community of Phoenix in 1898, a white Republican candidate for Congress urged black men to fill out an affidavit if they were not permitted to vote. This produced a confrontation with Democrats. Words were exchanged, shots were fired, and the Republican candidate was wounded. White men then went on a rampage through rural Greenwood County. Black men were killed—how many is unknown. Others, including Benjamin Mays’s father, as related in one of the quotes that opens this chapter—had to humiliate themselves by bowing down and saluting white men.

The Wilmington Riot

While white men roamed Greenwood County for black victims, an even bloodier riot erupted in Wilmington, North Carolina. Black and white men shared power as Republicans and Populists in Wilmington’s government, and white Democrats resented it. With the encouragement of the *Wilmington News and Observer*, the Democrats were determined to



The Pullman Company manufactured and operated passenger, sleeping, and dining cars for the nation’s railroads. The company employed black men to serve and wait on passengers, who were usually white people. Black porters and attendants were expected to be properly deferential as they dealt with passengers.

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 **Read on MyHistoryLab Document:**
Alex Manly Challenges a White Woman's
Call for More Lynchings, 1898

drive the legitimately elected political leaders from power. Alfred Moore Waddell, a former Confederate and U.S. congressman, vowed in a speech to “choke the Cape Fear [River] with carcasses.”

In the midst of this tense situation, Alex Manly, the young editor of a local black newspaper, the *Daily Record*, wrote an editorial condemning white men for the sexual exploitation of black women. Manly also suggested that black men had sexual liaisons with rural white women, which infuriated the white community: “Poor white men are careless in the matter of protecting their women, especially on the farms. . . . Tell your men that it is no worse for a black man to be intimate with a white woman than for a white man to be intimate with a colored woman. . . . Don’t think ever that your women will remain pure while you are debauching ours.”

A white mob destroyed the newspaper office. Black and white officials resigned in a vain attempt to prevent further violence, but at least a dozen black men—and perhaps more—were murdered. Some 1,500 black residents of Wilmington fled. White people then bought up black homes and property at bargain rates. Waddell was installed as Wilmington’s new mayor. Black Congressman George H. White, who represented Wilmington and North Carolina’s second district, served the remainder of his term and then moved north. He remarked, “I can no longer live in North Carolina and be a man.” White was the last black man to serve in Congress from the South until the election of Andrew Young in Atlanta in 1972.

The New Orleans Riot

Robert Charles was a 34-year-old literate laborer who had migrated to New Orleans from rural Mississippi. Infuriated by lynching, he was tantalized by the prospect of emigration to Liberia promoted by African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Bishop Henry M. Turner. On July 23, 1900, white New Orleans police officers harassed Charles and a friend. One of the officers attempted to beat Charles with a nightstick. Failing to subdue the large black man, the officer then drew a gun. Charles pulled out his own gun, and each man wounded the other. Charles fled but was tracked down to a rooming house where he had secluded himself with a rifle, with which he

proceeded to shoot his tormentors. Eventually, a white mob that numbered as many as 20,000 gathered. In the meantime, Charles—an expert marksman—methodically shot 27 white people, killing seven, including four policemen. Finally, burned out of the dwelling, Charles was shot, and enraged white people stomped his corpse beyond recognition. Four days of rioting ensued. At least a dozen black people were killed and many more injured.

Lynching

Between 1889 and 1932, 3,745 people were lynched in the United States (see Figure 14–2). Two or three people were lynched, on average, every week for 30 years. Most lynchings happened in the South, and black men were usually the victims. Sometimes white people were lynched. In 1891 in New Orleans, 11 Italians were lynched for alleged involvement with the Mafia and for the murder of the city’s police chief. For black southerners, violence was an ever-present possibility. Rarely did a sheriff or police officer protect a potential victim; even if one did, that protection was often not enough.

Lynchings were never apprehended, tried, or convicted. Prominent community members frequently encouraged and even participated in lynch mobs. White politicians, journalists, and clergymen rarely denounced lynching in

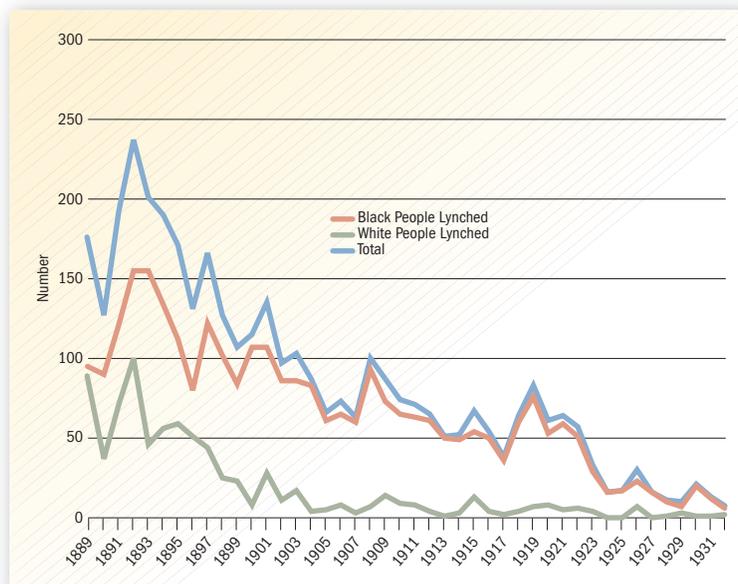


FIGURE 14–2 LYNCHING IN THE UNITED STATES: 1889–1932

Depending on the source, statistics on lynching vary. It was difficult to assemble information on lynching, particularly in the nineteenth century. Not every lynching was recorded.

SOURCE: *The Negro Year Book, 1931–32, 293.*

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public. The *Atlanta Constitution* dismissed lynching as relatively inconsequential: “There are places and occasions when the natural fury of men cannot be restrained by all the laws in Christendom.”

Lynchings were barbaric, savage, and hideous. Such mob brutality was another manifestation of white supremacy. Black people were murdered, beaten, burned, and mutilated for trivial reasons—or for no reason. Most white southerners justified lynching as a response to the raping of white women by black men. But many lynchings involved no alleged rape. Even in cases when a rape occurred, the person or persons lynched rarely were involved in the crime.

After a white family was murdered in Statesboro, Georgia, in 1904, Paul Reed and Will Cato were convicted of murder and then seized by a mob that invaded the courtroom. They were burned alive in front of a large crowd. Then the violence spread. Albert Roger and his son were lynched “for being Negroes.” A black man named McBride attempted to protect his wife who had had a baby three days earlier. He “was beaten, killed, and shot to death.”

Mobs often attacked black people who had achieved economic success. In Memphis, Thomas Moss with two friends opened the People’s Grocery Company in a black neighborhood. The store flourished, but it competed with a white-owned grocery. “They were succeeding too well,” one of Moss’s friends observed. After the white grocer had the three black men indicted for conspiracy, black people organized a protest, and violence followed. The three black men were jailed. A white mob attacked the jail, lynched them, and looted their store. Ida B. Wells, a newspaper editor and a friend of Moss, was heartbroken: “A finer, cleaner man than he never walked the streets of Memphis.” She considered his lynching an “excuse to get rid of Negroes who were acquiring wealth and property and thus keep the race terrorized and keep the nigger down.” Wells began a lifelong crusade against lynching. (See *Profile: Ida Wells Barnett*.)

Although less often than men, black women were also lynched. In 1914 in Wagoner County, Oklahoma, 17-year-old Marie Scott was lynched because her brother had killed a white man who had raped her. In Valdosta, Georgia, in 1918, after Mary Turner’s husband was lynched, she publicly vowed to bring those responsible to justice. Although she was eight months pregnant, a mob seized her, tied her ankles together, and hanged her upside down from a tree. Someone slit her abdomen, and her nearly full-term child fell to the ground. The mob stomped the infant to death. They then set her clothes on fire and shot her.

Rape

Although white people often justified lynching as a response to the presumed threat black men posed to the virtue of white women, white men routinely harassed and abused black women. There are no statistics on such abuse, but it surely was more common than lynching. Like lynching, rape demonstrated the power of white men over black men and women.

Black men tried to keep their wives and daughters away from white men. For example, they often refused to permit black women to work as servants in homes where white men were present. One black man commented in 1912, “I believe nearly all white men take, and expect to take, undue liberties with their colored female servants, not only the fathers, but in many cases the sons also.” A black man could not easily protect a black woman. He might be killed trying to do so, as an Alabama clergyman pointed out: “White men on the highways and in their stores and on the trains will insult our women and we are powerless to resent it as it would only be an invitation for our lives to be taken.”

Many white people believed black women “invited” white males to take advantage of them. Black women were considered inferior, immoral, and lascivious. Therefore, white people reasoned it was impossible to defend the virtue of black women because they had none. Governor Coleman Blease of South Carolina pardoned black and white men found guilty of raping black women. “I am of the opinion,” he said in 1913, “as I have always been, and have very serious doubts as to whether the crime of rape can be committed upon a negro.”



Listen on MyHistoryLab Audio: Lynch Law in Georgia; by Ida B. Wells Barnett, pamphlet excerpt

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EXPLORE ON MYHISTORYLAB

Racial Violence in the United States, 1880–1930

What was the relationship between racial inequality and violence in the South by the early 1900s?

Although slavery was abolished by the Thirteenth Amendment, the promises of legal and political equality offered to African Americans under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments did not last long following the end of Reconstruction. White southerners were determined that African Americans remain a subordinate people in the South. This system of discrimination included the disfranchisement of African Americans. Widespread violence was also employed to maintain white control. African Americans who threatened the status quo were lynched. Victims were often falsely accused of some crime and subsequently murdered without a trial. Lynching was a tool to maintain the social, political, and economic dominance of white southerners over African-American people and their communities.

TOTAL LYNCHINGS IN SELECTED STATES, 1900–1931

State	Total
Alabama	132
Arkansas	127
Florida	170
Georgia	302
Louisiana	172
Mississippi	285
Texas	201

SOURCE: *Lynchings by States and Counties in the United States 1900 to 1931*, Research Department, Tuskegee Institute, <http://memory.loc.gov/>.



Lynchings were common and public events in the South. Jesse Washington, a 17-year-old, was accused and found guilty of the murder and rape of a white woman in Waco, Texas, in 1916. Before the sentence could be carried out, he was lynched in front of a crowd of several thousand people.

Explore the Topic on MyHistoryLab

- 1. Analysis** *In what regions of the South were lynchings most common? Consider the reasons behind such patterns.*
- 2. Consequence** *How did white literacy rates correspond to the frequency of lynchings in particular areas? Explore the relationship between these two elements.*
- 3. Response** *How did local economic patterns affect the prevalence of lynchings? Consider connections between land ownership and violence against African Americans.*

Migration

14-6 Why did relatively small numbers of African Americans begin to leave the South?

In 1900 AME Minister Henry McNeal Turner despaired for black people in America: “Every man that has the sense of an animal must see that there is no future in this country for the Negro. [W]e are taken out and burned, shot, hanged, unjointed and murdered in every way. Our civil rights are taken from us by force, our political rights are a farce.”

It is therefore surprising that more African Americans did not flee poverty, powerlessness, and brutality in the South. As late as 1910, 90 percent of black Americans still lived in the southern states. And of those who left the South, most did not head north along the old underground railroad route. The Great Migration to the northern industrial states did not begin until about 1915. Emigrants of the 1870s or 1880s were more likely to strike out for Africa; move west to Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas; or move from farms to southern towns or cities.

PROFILE

Ida Wells Barnett

IDA WELLS BARNETT began life as a slave in 1862 and grew up during Reconstruction. As a young woman, she saw the worst indignities and cruelties that the Jim Crow South could inflict, but she fought back as a journalist, agitator, and reformer.

Wells was one of eight children born to Jim and Lizzie Wells in Holly Springs, Mississippi. After the Civil War, she and her mother learned to read and write at a school for freed people. Her parents and one of her brothers died in the yellow fever epidemic of 1878. Sixteen-year-old Ida became mother and father to her five surviving siblings. She attended Shaw University

in Holly Springs (now Rust College) and taught school in Mississippi and Tennessee.

In 1884, a railroad conductor removed Wells from a first-class car. She sued the railroad and won a \$500 settlement. “Dusky Damsel Gets Damages,” a Memphis newspaper reported. But a higher court reversed the decision.

Wells then took up journalism and wrote a weekly column for the *Living Way*. In 1889, she bought a one-third interest in the *Memphis Free Speech and Headlight*. She wrote about racial issues and criticized black educators for the quality of black schools. In 1892 her friend Thomas Moss was lynched with two other men for the crime of running a successful grocery store. Wells expressed her rage and horror in a fiery editorial, thus beginning a lifelong crusade against lynching.

Wells blamed the white people of Memphis for her friend’s murder and pointed out that more black men were lynched for challenging the myth of white superiority than for allegedly raping a white woman. She angered white people even more by writing that white women could be attracted to black men.

She blamed white clergymen and their parishioners for tolerating lynching: “Our American Christians are too busy saving the souls of white Christians from

burning in hell-fire to save the lives of black ones from present burning in fires kindled by white Christians.”

Wells moved to Chicago and helped draft a pamphlet that criticized the exclusion of black people from the local groups that organized the 1893 World’s Fair. In 1895 she married Ferdinand Barnett, the owner of the *Chicago Conservator*.

After a white journalist from Missouri wrote that black women were immoral, “having no sense of virtue and altogether without character,” black women including Wells Barnett founded the National Association of Colored Women in 1896.

In 1909, Wells Barnett was one of two black women who supported the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), although she later broke with the group because of its mostly white board of directors and what she considered its cautious stands. She also helped organize the Negro Fellowship League in 1910.

Wells Barnett became an ardent supporter of black voting rights. She believed that if enough black men and women could vote, their political power would end lynching. In 1913 she helped found the Alpha Suffrage Club, the first black women’s suffrage organization in Illinois, and was a delegate to the National American Woman’s Suffrage Association meeting in Washington, DC.

Ever an agitator, she found Booker T. Washington’s philosophy too timid. She was influenced by the Universal Negro Improvement Association in the 1920s and praised Marcus Garvey as a black leader who “made an impression on this country as no Negro before him had ever done.”

She continued to write, campaign, speak out, and organize. She protested the execution of black soldiers after the 1917 Houston riot. She exposed the injustice 12 poor black farmers experienced after the Elaine riot and massacre in 1919 (see p. 428). She supported A. Phillip Randolph and the formation of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (see p. 454). In 1928 she ran as a Republican for the state senate. Only death from kidney failure in 1931 ended her efforts to secure justice for black Americans.



Read on MyHistoryLab Document: Ida B. Wells Challenges White Justifications for Lynchings, 1895

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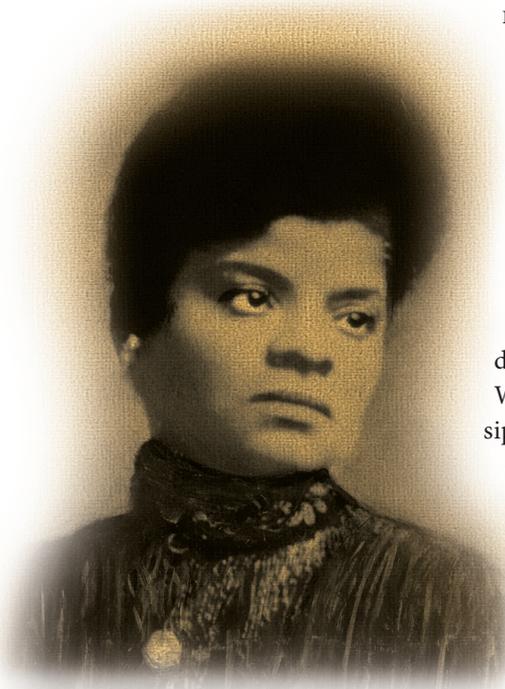
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Explore on **MyHistoryLab Activity:**
Going Back to Africa

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The Liberian Exodus

When in 1875 white Democrats redeemed Mississippi with the “shotgun policy,” a group of black people from Winona, Mississippi, wrote to Governor Adelbert Ames “to inquire about the possibility of moving to Africa. [W]e the colored people of Montgomery County are in a bad fix for we have no rights in the county and we want to know of you if there is any way for us to get out of the county and go to some place where we can get homes . . . so will you please let us know if we can go to Africa?”

They did not go to Africa, but some black Georgians and South Carolinians did. In 1877 black leaders in South Carolina, including Congressman Richard H. Cain, probate judge Harrison N. Bouey, and Martin Delany, urged black people to migrate to Liberia. Black communities and churches caught “Liberia Fever” while black people in upper South Carolina still felt the trauma of the terror that had ended Reconstruction.

A white journalist described the situation in Chester County: “At some places in this county the desire to shake off the dust of their feet against this Democratic State is so great, that they are talking of selling out their crops and their personal effects, save what they would need in their new home.” They were given promising although sometimes inaccurate information about Liberia. One potato in Liberia, they were told, could feed an entire family.

Several black men organized the Liberian Exodus Joint Stock Steamship Company. They raised \$6,000 and hired a ship, the *Azor*. The ship left Charleston in April 1878 with 206 migrants aboard, leaving 175 behind because there was not enough room for them. With inadequate food and freshwater and no competent medical care, 23 migrants died at sea. The ship arrived in Liberia on June 3.

In Liberia, several of the migrants prospered. Sam Hill established a 700-acre coffee plantation, and C. L. Parsons became the chief justice of the Liberian Supreme Court. But others did less well, and some returned to the United States. The Liberian Exodus Company experienced financial difficulties and could not pay for further voyages.

In a paradoxical twist in 1890, South Carolina Democrat Matthew C. Butler introduced an emigration bill in the U.S. Senate to appropriate \$5 million per year to transport African Americans who volunteered to migrate to Africa. Butler was a former Confederate general who had helped redeem South Carolina. Most African Americans—including Frederick Douglass and Robert Smalls—opposed the legislation, but some, including Henry McNeal Turner, supported it. Butler’s bill never passed. (See the *Profile* on Turner in Chapter 15.)

The Exodusters

In May 1879 black delegates from 14 states met in a convention in Nashville presided over by Congressman John R. Lynch of Mississippi. The delegates declared that “the colored people should emigrate to those States and Territories where they can enjoy all the rights which are guaranteed by the laws and Constitution of the United States.” They also asked Congress—in vain—for \$500,000 for this venture.

Nevertheless, black people headed west. Between 1865 and 1880, 40,000 black people known as “**Exodusters**” moved to Kansas. Benjamin “Pap” Singleton, a charismatic ex-slave from Tennessee, persuaded several hundred to migrate. Six black men were instrumental in founding the Kansas town of Nicodemus in 1877. Named after an African prince who bought his freedom, Nicodemus thrived in the 1880s with a hotel, two newspapers, a general store, a drugstore, a school, and three churches. Several of the businesses were white owned. Edwin P. McCabe, a black native of Troy, New York, settled for a time in Nicodemus, and in 1882 Kansas voters elected him state auditor.

By 1890, however, Nicodemus went into a decline from which it never recovered. Three railroads were built across Kansas, but each avoided Nicodemus, spelling economic ruin for the community. Edwin McCabe moved to Oklahoma and helped found the black town of Langston. Eventually more black people settled in Oklahoma than in Kansas.

Exodusters Black migrants who left the South during and after Reconstruction and settled in Kansas, often in all-black towns.



With their meager belongings, these African Americans await the arrival of a steamboat in about 1878 to transport them to Kansas or perhaps another western location.

By 1900 African Americans possessed 1.5 million acres in Oklahoma worth \$11 million. In 1889 Congress enacted legislation eliminating Indian Territory in Oklahoma, dispossessing the Five Civilized Tribes of their land and dismantling tribal government. More than two dozen black towns, including Boley and Liberty, were founded in Oklahoma. There were nearly 50 black towns in the West by the early twentieth century, including Allensworth, California; Blackdom, New Mexico; and Dearfield, Colorado. Other black migrants settled in rural and isolated portions of Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Colorado (see Map 14–1).

Many people who moved west after the Civil War took advantage of the 1862 Homestead Act, which provided 160 acres of federal land free to those who would settle on it and farm it for at least five years. (Alternatively, a settler could buy the land for \$1.25 per acre and possess it after six months' residency.) Life on the frontier was often bleak, dreary, and lonely. People lived in sod houses and relied on cow (or buffalo) chips for heat and cooking fuel as they struggled to endure.

Railroads encouraged migration by offering reduced fares. Some western farmers and agents were eager to sell land, but some of it was of little value. Some white residents of Mississippi and South Carolina, which had large black majorities, were glad to see the black people go. However, the loss of cheap black labor alarmed others.

Some black leaders urged black people to stay put. In 1879 Frederick Douglass insisted that more opportunities existed for black people in the South than elsewhere: "Not only is the South the best locality for the Negro on the ground of his political powers and possibilities, but it is best for him as a field of labor. He is there, as he is nowhere else, an absolute necessity." Robert Smalls urged black people to come to his home county of Beaufort, South Carolina, "where I hardly think it probable that any prisoner will ever be taken from jail by a mob and lynched."

Migration within the South

Many black people left the poverty and isolation of farms and moved to villages and towns in the South. Others went to growing black neighborhoods in larger southern

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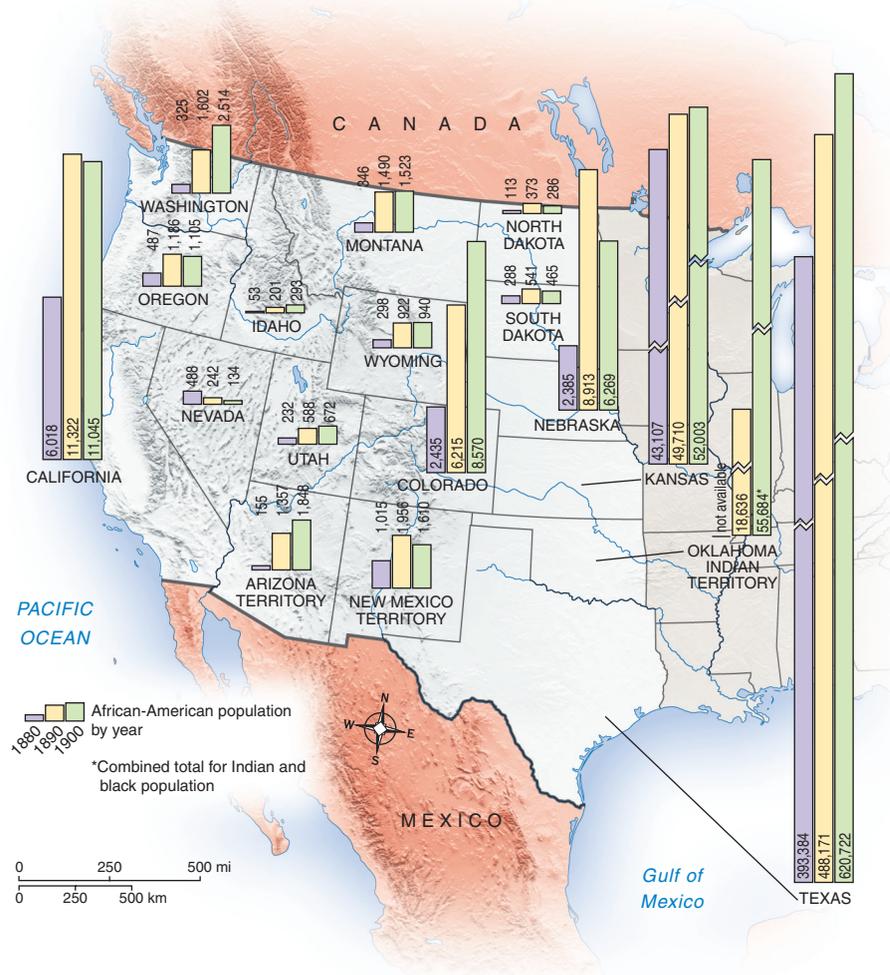
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MAP 14-1 AFRICAN-AMERICAN POPULATION OF WESTERN TERRITORIES AND STATES, 1880-1900

Although most African Americans remained in the South following the Civil War, thousands of black people moved west and settled on farms and ranches. Others migrated to small towns that were populated mostly by former slaves.

What motivated several thousand African Americans to move to the Great Plains, Rocky Mountains, and West Coast in the late nineteenth century?

cities like Atlanta, Richmond, and Nashville. Urban areas offered more economic opportunities than rural areas. Although black people were usually confined to menial labor—from painting and shining shoes to domestic service—city work paid cash on a fairly regular basis, whereas rural residents received no money until their crops were sold. Towns and cities also had more entertainment and religious and educational activities. Black youngsters in towns spent more time in school than rural children, who had to work the farms.

Black women had a better chance than black men of finding regular work in a town, although it was usually as a domestic or cleaning woman. This economic situation damaged the black family. Before the increase in migration, a husband and wife headed 90 percent

of black families. But with migration, many black men remained in rural areas where they could get farm work, while women went to urban communities. Often these women became single heads of households.

Black Farm Families

14-7 What economic situation did large numbers of African Americans find themselves caught up in across the South in the late nineteenth century?

Most black people remained poverty-stricken sharecroppers and renters on impoverished, white-owned land. They were poorly educated. They lacked political power. They were invariably in debt. Many rural black families remained close to involuntary servitude in the decades after Reconstruction.

Many black and white southerners were hardly better off than medieval serfs. They lived in drafty, leaky cabins without electricity or running water. Outdoor toilets created health problems. Medical care was often unavailable. Diets were dreary and unbalanced—mostly pork and cornbread—and deficient in vitamins and protein.

Cultivating Cotton

By the late 1800s, farmers in the Midwest and on the Great Plains had access to expensive labor-saving machinery such as reapers, threshers, and combines that enabled them to cultivate hundreds if not thousands of acres of grain. In the South cotton was unaffected by mechanization until the 1930s and 1940s. From the end of slavery into the twentieth century, black farm families annually grew millions of pounds of cotton by spending hundreds of millions of hours in the fields.

Each spring an older youth or adult walked behind a mule and broke the ground with a plow. At the end of a row, the farmer might shout “haw!” to the mule, and the animal then made a left turn to plow another row. Men, women, and children then planted cotton seeds and supplied fertilizer—guano—to the soil. When the green cotton plants emerged, the weaker plants were removed. From May until July, the field was hoed or chopped repeatedly to remove weeds that competed with the cotton for nutrients.



For generations after the Civil War, African-American men, women, and children planted, tended, and picked cotton.

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“Lay-by” time came in July and August as the cotton plants matured and the “fruit” or the cotton bolls grew. There was less work during lay-by time, and children sometimes went to school in July and August. The cotton was then picked by hand beginning in the oppressive heat and humidity of August and continuing into September and October. Family members carried large baskets or enormous sacks through the fields as they removed the cotton from the spiny bolls. Because the bolls did not open simultaneously, the fields had to be picked more than once. The larger the family, the larger the labor force, and the more cotton they could harvest.

Benjamin Mays described his experience in the fields as a 12-year-old in early twentieth-century South Carolina: “When it came to picking cotton, my brother Hezekiah and I were the best in the family, and among the best cotton pickers in the county. We often competed with each other to see which could pick the most cotton. . . . ‘H. H.’ as we called him and I competed all day, from sunup to sundown, . . . when father weighed the cotton that evening, H. H. had picked 424 pounds and I had picked 425.”

Picked cotton was stored before it was transported by wagon to the local ginnery. A few cotton gins were still operated with animal or water power; however, by the late nineteenth century steam engines ran the equipment at most ginneries. The modern facility was typically a two-story frame building that featured a large hose-like device that suctioned the cotton from the wagon. A separator then removed debris before a conveyor belt sent the clean cotton to gins that removed the cotton seeds. Then a large hydraulic press compressed the cotton into bales that weighed approximately 500 pounds each. Wagons took the bales to a nearby railroad depot where they were shipped to a textile mill.

Sharecroppers

Most of these black farm families (and many white families) were sharecroppers. Sharecropping had emerged during Reconstruction as landowners allowed the use of their land for a share of the crop. The landlord also usually provided housing, horses or mules, tools, seed, and fertilizer, as well as food and clothing. In return, the landowner received from one-half to three-quarters of the crop.

Sharecropping lent itself to exploitation. By law, verbal agreements were considered contracts. In any case, many sharecroppers were illiterate and could not have read written contracts. The landowner informed the sharecropper of the value of the product raised—typically cotton—and the value of the goods provided to the sharecropping family. Black farmers who disputed white landowners put themselves in peril. Although many sharecroppers knew the proprietor’s calculations were wrong, they could do nothing about it. Also, cotton brokers and gin owners routinely paid black farmers less than white farmers per pound for cotton. A forlorn ditty in the late nineteenth century captured this inequity:

A naught’s a naught, and a figger’s a figger—
All fer de white man—none fer de nigger!

Black men were forced to accept the white man’s word. One Mississippi sharecropper explained, “I have been living in this Delta thirty years, and I know that I have been robbed every year; but there is no use jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. If we ask any questions we are cussed, and if we raise up we are shot, and that ends it.”

Renters

Black farmers preferred renting to sharecropping. As tenants, they paid a flat charge to rent a given number of acres. Payment would be made in either cash—perhaps \$5 per acre—or, more typically, in a specified amount of the crop—two bales of cotton per 20 acres. Tenants

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Read on MyHistoryLab Document:
A Sharecrop Contract (1882)



Read on MyHistoryLab Document:
When We Worked on Shares, We Couldn't
Make Nothing

VOICES

Cash and Debt for the Black Cotton Farmer

Benjamin E. Mays was born in 1895 in Epworth, South Carolina. He was the youngest and eighth child of parents who had been slaves and whose lives revolved around agriculture. Mays went on to South Carolina State College, to Bates College in Maine, and to the University of Chicago. He became the president of Morehouse College in Atlanta, where he served as a mentor to Martin Luther King, Jr. Mays delivered the eulogy at King's funeral in 1968.

As I recall, Father usually rented forty acres of land for a two-mule farm, or sixty acres if we had three mules. The rent was two bales of cotton weighing 500 pounds each, for every twenty acres rented. So the owner of the land got his two, four, or six bales of cotton out of the first cotton picked and ginned.

To make sixteen bales of cotton on a two-mule farm was considered excellent farming. After four bales were used to pay rent, we would have twelve bales left. The price of cotton fluctuated. If we received ten cents a pound, we would have somewhere between five and six hundred dollars, depending on whether the bales of cotton weighed an average of 450, 475, or 500 pounds. When all of us children were at home we, with our father and mother, were ten. We lived in a four-room house, with no indoor plumbing—no toilet facilities, no running water.

We were never able to clear enough from the crop to carry us from one September to the next. We could usually go on our own from September through February; but every March a lien had to be placed on the crop so that we could get money to buy food and other necessities from March through August, when we would get some relief by selling cotton. Strange as it may seem, neither we nor our neighbors ever raised enough hogs to have meat year round, enough corn and wheat to insure having our daily bread, or cows in sufficient numbers to have enough milk. The curse was cotton. It was difficult to make farmers see that more corn, grain, hogs, and cows meant less cash but more profit in the end. Cotton sold instantly, and that was cash money. Negro farmers wanted to feel the cash—at least for that brief moment as it passed through their hands into the white man's hands!

1. What might have led to greater independence for people like the Mays family?
2. Why were southern black and white families so large?

SOURCE: *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1971), pp. 5–6. Reprinted by permission of the University of Georgia Press, 2001.

usually owned their own animals and tools. As Bessie Jones explained, “You see, a sharecropper don’t ever have nothing. Before you know it, the man done took it all. But the renter always have something, and then he go to work when he want to go to work. He ain’t got to go to work on the man’s time. If he didn’t make it, he didn’t get it.”

Crop Liens

Many sharecroppers and renters were also indebted to a merchant for food, clothing, and farm supplies. The merchant advanced the merchandise but took out a **lien** on the crop. If the sharecropper or renter failed to repay the merchant, the merchant was entitled to all or part of the crop once the landowner had received his payment. Merchants tended to charge high prices and interest rates. They usually insisted that farmers plant cotton before they would agree to a lien. Cotton could be sold quickly for cash.

lien Black and white farmers purchased goods on credit from local merchants. The merchant demanded collateral in the form of a lien on the crop, typically cotton. If the farmer failed to repay the loan, the merchant had a legal right to seize the crop.

Peonage

Many farmers fell deeply into debt. They were cheated. Bad weather destroyed crops. Crop prices declined. Farmers could not leave the land until their debts were paid. If they tried to depart, the sheriff pursued them. This was **peonage**, and it amounted to enslavement, holding thousands of black people across the South in perpetual bondage. Peonage violated

peonage The system that forbade southern farmers, usually sharecroppers and renters, who accumulated debts to leave the land until the debt was repaid—often an impossible task.

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While pursuing a master's degree at the University of Chicago, Benjamin E. Mays briefly taught English at South Carolina State College in Orangeburg. This is a photo taken from the 1926 college yearbook. He met his second wife, Sadie Grey, while teaching in Orangeburg. She was teaching sociology and also working on a graduate degree at the University of Chicago. Mays's first wife, Ellen Harvin, had died from complications due to child birth in 1923.

federal law, but the law was rarely enforced. White juries acquitted landowners and merchants who were prosecuted for keeping black people in peonage.

Black Landowners

Considering the incredible obstacles against them, black farm families acquired land at an astonishing rate after the Civil War. Many white people refused to sell land to black buyers, preferring to keep them dependent. Black people also found it difficult to save enough money to purchase land even when they could find a willing seller. Still, they managed to accumulate land.

A white Georgia farmer sourly commented that African Americans were desperate to get their own land: "They will almost starve and go naked before they will work for a white man, if they can get a patch of ground to live on and get from under his control."

Some black families had kept land that had been distributed in the Carolina and Georgia low country under the Port Royal Experiment and Sherman's Special Field Order #15 (see Chapter 12). In 1880 black people on South Carolina's sea islands held 10,000 acres of land worth \$300,000.

By 1900 more than 100,000 black families owned their own land in the eight states of the Deep South. Black landownership increased more than 500 percent between 1870 and 1900. Most black people possessed small farms of about 20 acres. These small plots were often subsequently subdivided among sons and grandsons, making it harder for their families to prosper. But some black farmers owned impressive estates. Prince Johnson had 360 acres of excellent Mississippi delta land. Freedman Leon Winter was the richest black man in Tennessee, with real estate worth \$70,000 in 1889. In Florida, J. D. McDuffy raised melons, cabbages, and tomatoes on an 800-acre farm near Ocala. Texas freedman Daniel Webster Wallace had a 10,000-acre cattle ranch. Few black people inherited large estates. Most of these landowners had been born into slavery. After emancipation, they managed to accumulate land—usually just a few acres at a time.

White Resentment of Black Success

Many white southerners could not tolerate black economic success and lashed out at those who had achieved it. For example, when one rural black man built an attractive new house, white people told him not to paint it—lest it look better than theirs. He accepted the advice and left the dwelling bare.

In the early twentieth century, Henry Watson, a well-to-do black farmer in Georgia, drove a new car to town. Enraged white people forced Watson and his daughter out at gunpoint and burned the vehicle. Watson was told, "From now on, you niggers walk into town, or use that ole mule if you want to stay in this city."

In 1916 Anthony Crawford, the owner of 427 acres of prime cotton land in Abbeville, South Carolina, secretary of the Chapel AME Church, a married man with 16 children, was arrested and then released after he quarreled with a local white merchant over the price of cotton seed. But a mob, infuriated that Crawford spoke so bluntly to a white man, went after him. "When a nigger gets impudent we stretch him out and paddle him a bit," exclaimed one white man. But Crawford resisted and crushed the skull of a white attacker. The mob then stabbed and beat Crawford before the sheriff rescued him and put him in jail. But a second mob broke into the jail and beat him to death. His body was left hanging at the fairgrounds. After his first beating, Crawford had told a friend, "I thought I was a good citizen." The coroner's jury ruled that his death had occurred at the hands of persons unknown.

African Americans and Southern Courts

14-8 How just was the legal system for black people in the South?

The southern criminal justice systems yielded nothing but injustice to black people. Southern lawmakers worried incessantly about what they considered the black crime problem and enacted laws to control the black population. Vagrancy laws made it easy to arrest idle black men or one who was passing through a community. Contract evasion laws ensnared black people who attempted to escape peonage and perpetual servitude.

Segregated Justice

The legal system also became increasingly white after Reconstruction. Black police officers were eliminated, and white policemen acquired a deserved reputation for brutality. Juries were all white by 1900. (No women served on southern juries.) In Alabama, a black man called for a local grand jury insisted on serving until he was beaten and forced to step down. Judges were white men. Most attorneys were white. The few black lawyers faced daunting hurdles. Some black defendants believed—correctly—that they would be convicted and sentenced to a longer term if they retained a black attorney rather than a white one. Court personnel treated black plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses with contempt, calling them “niggers,” “boy,” and “gal.” Black people were rarely “Mr.” or “Mrs.” in court proceedings.

A black defendant could not get justice. Black people were more often charged with crimes than white people. They were almost always convicted, regardless of the strength of the evidence or the credibility of witnesses. In one of the few instances when a black man was found not guilty of killing a white man, his attorney advised him to leave town because white people were unlikely to accept the verdict. He fled but returned 20 years later and was castrated by two white men.

Race took precedence in the legal system. Black victims of crime found the law turned against them. In 1897 in Hinds County, Mississippi, a white man beat a black woman with an axe handle. She took him to court, only to have the justice of the peace rule that he knew of “no law to punish a white man for beating a negro woman.”

Juries rarely found white people guilty of crimes against black people. In a Georgia case in 1911, the evidence against several white people for holding black families in peonage was so overwhelming that the judge virtually ordered the jury to return a guilty verdict. Nonetheless, after five minutes of deliberation, the jury found the defendants not guilty. Many black and white people were astonished in 1898 in Shreveport, Louisiana, when a jury found a white man guilty of murdering a black man. He was sentenced to five years in prison.

Black people could receive leniency from the judicial system, but it was not justice. They were much less likely to be charged with a crime against another black person, such as raping a black woman, than against a white person. Black people often were not charged with crimes such as adultery and bigamy because white people considered such offenses typical black behavior.

Black defendants who had some personal or economic connection to a prominent white person were less likely to be treated or punished the same way as black people who had no such relationship. In Vicksburg, Mississippi, a black woman watched as the black man who had murdered her husband was acquitted because a white man intervened. Those black people known as “a white man’s nigger” had an advantage in court.

Black people received longer sentences and larger fines than white people. In Georgia, black convicts served much longer sentences than white convicts for the same offense—five times as long for larceny, for example. An 80-year-old black preacher went to prison “for what a white man was fined five dollars.” In New Orleans, a black man was sentenced to

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PROFILE Johnson C. Whittaker

14-1 SHORTLY AFTER 6 A.M. ON APRIL 6, 1880, West Point's lone black cadet, Johnson C. Whittaker, was found lying unconscious on the floor of his room in the barracks. He was splattered with blood. His hands were tied together, and his feet were tied to the bed. In the months that followed, Whittaker's case attracted nationwide attention.

14-2 Whittaker was born a slave in 1858 near Camden, South Carolina, the son of a house slave and a free man. In 1876 white Republican Congressman Solomon L. Hoge nominated Whittaker to West Point.

14-3 During his first year at the military academy, Whittaker roomed with the only other black cadet, Henry O. Flipper. But Flipper graduated in 1877—the first black man to graduate from the academy—and Whittaker spent the next four years completely ostracized as the only remaining black cadet. White cadets refused to associate or room with him. Quiet and studious, he had a creditable academic record, but when he failed an exam in 1878, he had to repeat a year.

14-4 When he was found bloody and bound, Whittaker claimed he had been assaulted by three masked men after receiving a warning note the day before. A court of inquiry, however, declared that he had mutilated himself. Whittaker then insisted on a court-martial to prove his innocence. In February 1881, that court-martial convened in New York City.

14-5 Whittaker was charged with conduct unbecoming an officer and with lying. After four months of testimony, the court found him guilty. It determined that Whittaker was “shamming”—making it up to avoid failing an exam. Major Asa Bird Gardiner told the court, “Negroes are noted for their ability to sham and feign.” Gardiner maintained that

Whittaker was unfit: “By his own story the accused has shown himself a coward without one redeeming quality . . . his mental attitude [was] inferior to the average Anglo-Saxon.”

The court ordered Whittaker dishonorably discharged, fined \$1, and sentenced to a year's hard labor. But in March 1882, President Chester Arthur overturned the verdict. On the same day, Secretary of War Robert Lincoln (Abraham's son) ordered Whittaker discharged from West Point.

Whittaker spent most of the rest of his life working with young black people at South Carolina State College and at Douglass High School in Oklahoma City. He died in South Carolina in 1931. Whittaker had two sons. Both were commissioned officers and served in all-black units in World War I.

Whittaker summed up the meaning of his experience at West Point in a speech after the court-martial found him guilty:

West Point has tried to take from me honor and good name, but West Point has failed. I have honor and manhood still left me. I have an education which none can take from me. That education has come to me at fearful cost. The government may not wish me to use it in her service, but I shall use it for the good of my fellow men and for the good of those around me. . . . Poverty and sneers can never crush manhood. With God as my guide, duty will be my watchword, I can, I must, I will win a place in life!

In July 1995, President Bill Clinton posthumously awarded Johnson C. Whittaker his commission in the U.S. Army.

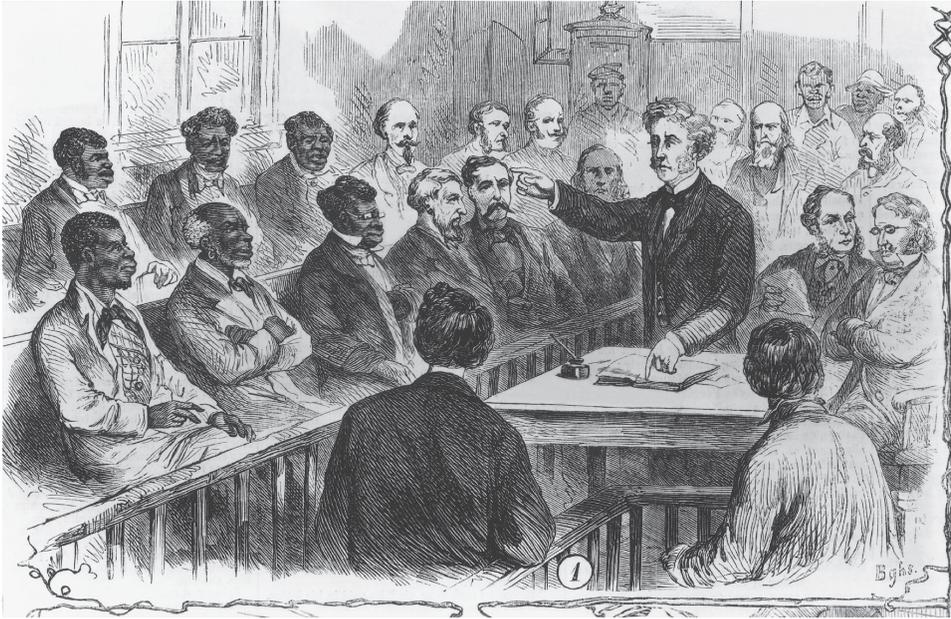
90 days in jail for petty theft. A black newspaper said it was “three days for stealing and eighty-seven days for being colored.”

The Convict Lease System

Conditions in southern prisons were wretched. Black prisoners—many incarcerated for vagrancy, theft, disorderly conduct, and other misdemeanors—spent months and years in oppressive conditions and were unrelentingly abused by white authorities. Nonetheless, conditions got worse.

In the late nineteenth century, southern politicians devised the **convict lease system**. Businesses and planters leased convicts from the state to build railroads, clear swamps, cut timber, tend cotton, and work mines. The company or planter had to feed, clothe, and

convict lease system Southern states and communities leased prisoners to privately operated mines, railroads, and timber companies. These businesses forced the prisoners, who were usually black men, to work in brutal, unhealthy, and dangerous conditions. Many convicts died of abuse and disease.



Black and white men serve on a jury together during Reconstruction but they segregate themselves.

house the prisoners. Of course, the convicts were not paid. The state and local community were not only freed of the burden of maintaining prisons and jails but also received revenue. For example, the state of South Carolina was paid \$3 per month per prisoner. Some states and counties found this so remunerative that law enforcement officials were encouraged to arrest and convict even more black men so that they could contribute to this lucrative enterprise.

Leased convicts endured appalling conditions. They were shackled and beaten, overworked, and underfed. They slept on vermin-infested straw mattresses and received little or no medical care. They sustained terrible injuries on the job and at the hands of guards. Diseases proliferated in the camps. Hundreds died. They had, in effect, been sentenced to death for petty crimes.

Businessmen and planters found such cheap labor almost irresistible. Black prisoners found it “nine kinds of hell.” It was worse than slavery because these black lives had no value to either the government or the businesses involved in this sordid system. As one employer explained in 1883, “But these convicts; we don’t own em. One dies, get another.” Convict leasing became such a scandal that several states outlawed it by the early twentieth century.

CONCLUSION

With the end of the Civil War and slavery in 1865, more than four million African Americans had looked with hope and anticipation to the future. Four decades later, there were more than nine million African Americans, and more than eight million of them lived in the South. The crushing burden of white supremacy limited their hopes and aspirations. The U.S. government abandoned black people to white southerners and their state and local governments. The federal government that had affirmed their rights as citizens during Reconstruction ignored the legal, political, and economic situation that entrapped most black southerners.

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Although the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, thousands of black people were trapped in peonage or labored as sharecroppers and renters, indebted to white landowners and merchants. Yet more than 100,000 black families managed to acquire their own farms by 1900. Many black farmers had also organized and participated in the Colored Farmers' Alliance and the Populist Party, although it brought few tangible benefits.

The Fourteenth Amendment had guaranteed the rights of citizenship that included due process of law. No state could deprive a person of life, liberty, or property without a court proceeding. The amendment also ensured each citizen equal protection of the law. But the Supreme Court had ruled that racial segregation in public places did not infringe on the right to equal protection of the law. And as for the right to life, by the early 1900s, mobs had lynched hundreds of black people.

The Fifteenth Amendment stipulated that race could not be used to deprive a man of the right to vote. But southern states circumvented the amendment with poll taxes, literacy tests, and the grandfather clause. Thus, by 1900, after black men had held political offices across the South for 30 years, no black person served in an elected political position in any southern state.

White people regarded black Americans as an inferior race not entitled to those rights that the Constitution supposedly guaranteed. What could black people do about the discrimination, violence, and powerlessness they had to endure? What strategies, ideas, and leadership could overcome the burdens they were forced to bear? What chances did they have of overcoming white supremacy? How could black people organize to gain fundamental rights that were guaranteed to them?

CHAPTER TIMELINE

AFRICAN-AMERICAN EVENTS

NATIONAL EVENTS

1875–1880

1880
Cadet Johnson C. Whittaker assaulted at West Point

1877
Reconstruction ends
1880
James Garfield elected president

1880–1890

1881
Tennessee segregates passenger trains
Tuskegee Institute founded
1886
Riot in Washington County, Texas
1887
National Colored Farmers' Alliance formed
Florida segregates passenger trains
1889–1908
Southern states disfranchise black voters

1880s
Southern Farmers' Alliance forms
1881
President Garfield assassinated
Clara Barton establishes the Red Cross
1884
Grover Cleveland elected president
1886
Haymarket affair in Chicago
1887
Congress creates the Interstate Commerce Commission
Dawes Act permits individual Indian families to own reservation land
1888
Benjamin Harrison elected president
1889
Wall Street Journal established

1890–1895

1891
Georgia segregates streetcars
1892
235 people lynched in the United States, 155 of them African American

1890
Eleven Italians lynched in New Orleans
James A. Naismith invents basketball
1892
Populist Party challenges the Democrats and Republicans in national elections
Homestead strike at the Carnegie steel plant near Pittsburgh
Grover Cleveland elected to a second term as president
1893
Panic of 1893 begins economic depression

1895–1900

1896
In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, Supreme Court upholds legal segregation
1898
Phoenix riot in South Carolina
Wilmington riot in North Carolina
1899–1901
George H. White of North Carolina—the South's last black congressman until 1972
1900
New Orleans riot

1896
William McKinley elected president
Populist Party's last national campaign
1898
Eugene V. Debs helps found Socialist Party
United States annexes Hawaii
Spanish-American War
1900
William McKinley reelected president

On MyHistoryLab



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How were black people prevented from voting despite the Fifteenth Amendment?
2. How did white Americans justify segregation?
3. Why did the South experience an epidemic of violence and lynching in the late nineteenth century?
4. Why didn't more black people leave the South in this period?

RECOMMENDED READING

Edward L. Ayers. *The Promise of the New South: Life After Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. An excellent overview of life in the late nineteenth-century South.

Douglas A. Blackmon. *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. New York: Random House, 2009. Thousands of black people were taken into custody and forced into labor in the decades following the Civil War.

Leon Litwack. *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998. In moving words, black people describe life in a white supremacist society.

Rayford Logan. *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877–1901*. New York: Dial Press, 1954. Explorations of the contours and oppressiveness of racism.

Benjamin E. Mays. *Born to Rebel: An Autobiography*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1971. Graphic recollection of growing up black in the rural South at the turn of the century.

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Paula Giddings. *Ida: A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching*. New York: Amistad, Harper Collins, 2008.

John F. Marszalek, Jr. *Court Martial: The Army vs. Johnson Whittaker*. New York: Scribner, 1972.

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Patricia A. Schechter. *Ida B. Wells-Barnett and American Reform, 1882–1930*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001.

POLITICS AND SEGREGATION

Grace Hale. *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890–1940*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1998.

William James Hull Hoffer. *Plessy v. Ferguson: Race and Inequality in Jim Crow America*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2012.

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James Allen, Hinton Als, John Lewis, and Leon F. Litwack. *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*. Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Books, 2000.

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RETRACING THE ODYSSEY

Nicodemus National Historic Site, Nicodemus, Kansas.

W. R. Hill was a black real estate agent who founded Nicodemus in 1877. By 1887 over 250 people lived in the town. The absence of a railroad led to a prolonged decline of what had been a small thriving community. Most of the town's original structures have not survived.

Langston, Oklahoma, and Langston University. Langston was one of the many all-black towns established after the Civil War. In 1897 the town set aside 40 acres to create a black land-grant university. The town and university are named for John Mercer Langston, a prominent nineteenth-century black leader and congressman from Virginia.

Historic District, Boley, Oklahoma. Boley was an all-black town incorporated in 1905. Many of the town's residents left when the economy collapsed during the Great Depression. Some of the historic black businesses and buildings still stand.

Black American West Museum and Heritage Center, Denver, Colorado. Founded by Paul Stewart, this museum is dedicated to the black pioneers of the frontier West, including cowboys, soldiers, barbers, and homesteaders. It has artifacts, photographs, recordings, and other memorabilia of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century African Americans. It is located in the former home of Dr. Justina Ford, a pioneer and black woman physician who delivered seven thousand babies of virtually every ethnic background.