

Unit 11: *Reconstruction*

Lecture 11.1 • *Restoring the Union*

*After the Civil War was over, the federal government had to devise a plan for **Reconstruction***

- The job before them was enormous. The government needed to decide how to:
 1. rebuild the physical infrastructure of the South
 2. readmit the former Confederate states back into the Union
 3. deal with all the former Confederate prisoners, and
 4. help craft a future for nine million formerly enslaved people.
- The first, and most obvious task was to officially abolish slavery, which Congress did by ratifying the 13th Amendment in 1865...

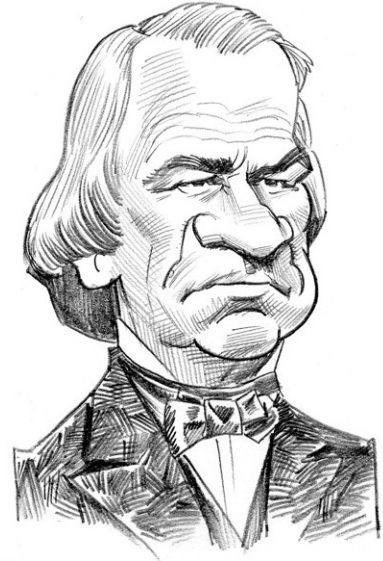
Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to its jurisdiction.

- In general though, two broad plans for Reconstruction emerged...

Option 1: Make the South pay for starting the war and make it difficult for them to regain their seats in Congress. This option was favored by the Republican-controlled Congress.

Option 2: “Bury the hatchet” and get the country back together as quickly as possible. This option was favored by the Republican President, Abraham Lincoln, and the Democrats in Congress.

- Lincoln himself wanted to create a colony of ex-slaves, and move them all to Panama.
- The President and Congress were preparing to debate which route to take, when in April, 1865, Lincoln was assassinated by a Southerner, **John Wilkes Booth**, as part of a plot to topple the government.
- Lincoln was replaced by Vice-President **Andrew Johnson**, a Southern Democrat who had an even more forgiving view of Reconstruction than Lincoln.



Who is this?

Reconstruction:
the period of rebuilding the country after the Civil War

Lecture 11.2 • *Radical Reconsstruction*

- In the election of 1866, the Republicans took 38 seats in Congress from the Democrats, and with a 77% super-majority were now able to override any challenge from President Johnson.
- With their super majority, Congress passed the **Reconstruction Act** past Johnson and made it clear that the South was going to face a harsh Reconstruction.
- But with the government mired down in the *politics* of Reconstruction, not a lot was actually changing in the South.
- That lack of progress led to dozens of race riots across the South that year. Riots in **Memphis**, and **New Orleans** left 200 people dead.
- After their victory in getting the Reconstruction Act passed over President Johnson's opposition, Congress pressed their advantage, and tried to **impeach** Johnson.
- Johnson survived being impeached, but in 1868, he lost the presidency to **Ulysses S. Grant**.
- Before leaving office though, Johnson issued an **amnesty** to all former Confederates.
- So now, with the Republicans firmly in control of Congress and the White House, the Reconstruction Act went into full effect.
- The South was divided into five military districts, and the U.S. Army was left in the South to enforce federal laws, and protect the formerly enslaved.
- With the old Southern social order gone many black run for public office, buy land, open businesses, and demand social equality. The promise of new birth freedom was alive! ... or *was* it?



In 1870, Hiran Revels because the first African-American to hold what political office?

impeach:

to place an elected official on trial for a crime

amnesty:

an official pardon for a politically motivated crime

Lecture 11.3 • *The Battle for the South*

- Many white Southerners resisted the changes brought on by Reconstruction. Because they wanted to conserve the old Southern way of life, they were called “conservatives”, and they did everything they could to keep black Southerners from gaining power.
- All across the South, many former Confederate states begin passing new laws to **disenfranchise** black power:
 1. **Black Codes** - laws banning blacks people from voting, owning guns, and sitting on juries
 2. **Poll Taxes** - a tax on voting
 3. **Literacy Tests** - “You can’t vote if you can’t read.”
 4. **Grandfather Clauses** - “You can vote, if your father voted.”
 5. **“Jim Crow” Laws** - Blacks and whites had to have separate areas in schools, hospitals, restaurants, theaters, trains, beaches, and even churches & cemeteries!
- Congress fought back with the **Civil Rights Act of 1866**, which affirmed the rights of black people to sign contracts, file law suits, testify in court, and own property.
- As Congress became more aggressive, so did Southern conservatives, and many began to favor a more... “direct” approach in dealing with those black people who refused to surrender their rights and liberties.
- In 1865, former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest established a “club” for Southern “gentlemen” called the **Ku Klux Klan**.
- From 1865 to 1868, the Klan terrorized the citizens of the South, and conducted 1,300 **lynchings**.



Who is this black folk character?

disenfranchise:
deny or deprive someone of a right or privilege

lynching:
the illegal hanging of a person

Lecture 11.4 • *The “New” South*

- Even with the U.S. Army enforcing federal Reconstruction law in the South, literacy tests, poll taxes, Jim Crow laws, and **segregation** started to spread across the former Confederate states.
- As the South began to slide back into the hands of the conservatives, all eyes turned to Washington. How would the government react?
- The race riots that plagued the country were getting worse. The 1868 **Opelousas Massacre** for example, left 300 black people dead. Their crime? They marched for the right to vote.
- That same year, 1868, Congress passed an important amendment to the Constitution... the **14th Amendment**, which guaranteed all citizens “equal protection under the law”.
- In a nut shell, the 14th Amendment specifies that no state or local government can deny their citizens the freedoms guaranteed to all Americans citizens at the national level. In other words, states cannot ignore federal law.
- However, there was — and still is — a question about private discrimination: can hotels, diners, bus companies, sports teams, and cake shops discriminate if they wish?
- Two years later, in 1870, the **15th Amendment** was ratified, which specifically guaranteed every citizen the right to vote, despite their race.
- Congress fought back against the KKK with the **Civil Rights Act of 1871** — the “Klan Act” — which made lynchings, and other civil rights violations federal crimes, with harsher penalties, and longer jail sentences.
- Congress’ sweeping actions didn’t stop the violence though. In 1873, 150 black people were killed during voting riots in Colfax, LA.
- It was over 10 years since the end of the Civil War, and both politicians and the American people were growing weary of the constant racial debates and violence. For better or for worse, Reconstruction was coming to a close...

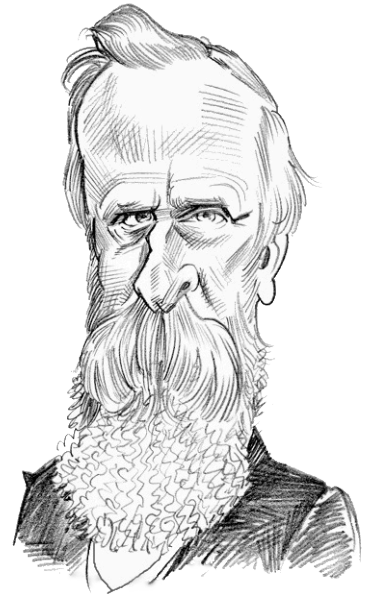


The cake shop reference in this lecture... does anyone know what that’s a reference to?

segregation:
the separation of people based upon their race

Lecture 11.5 • *The Abandoned Promise*

- The end of Reconstruction started with a political compromise in Washington.
- The presidential election of 1876 resulted in an electoral vote tie between the Democratic candidate, **Samual Tilden**, and the Republican, **Rutherford B. Hayes**.
- So the “**Compromise of 1877**” was devised. In exchange for the Democrats accepting Hayes as president, the Republicans agreed to end Reconstruction, and return control of the South to Southerners.
- Federal troops were pulled out of the South, and with them went any real enforcement of the 14th & 15th Amendments, and the Civil Rights Acts.
- With the Civil War now 15 years in the past, and Reconstruction officially over, much of the progress made by black Southerners began to be whittled away.
- Even slavery returned in a way as local Southern sheriffs and prison wardens took advantage of the 13th Amendment and began “**convict leasing**” prison chain gangs out to farmers and railroads.
- Without a constant supply of prisoners though, the system wouldn’t work, so black men were routinely arrested and imprisoned without due process, and for crimes they didn’t commit.
- By the late-1870s, the nation had clearly grown weary of the racial tension in the country, and was growing more and more focussed on the promise of wealth, industry, and science in The Gilded Age.



Who is this?

convict leasing:
renting prisoners out to farms
and construction companies

Lecture 11.6 • *The “Lost Cause”*

- By the 1890s, it was almost as if the Civil War had never happened:
- Confederate monuments began popping up all across the South.
- In 1898, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that racial discrimination and segregation were legal as long as the separate facilities and opportunities were equal.
- Meanwhile, Southern historians began to re-write the history of the Civil War. What emerged was the myth of the...
“The Lost Cause”.



Myth #1: *The Civil War was about “States Rights” ... not slavery.*

The **TRUTH:** When the Confederate states seceded, they cited slavery as the reason they were seceding.

Myth #2: *The South almost won the war.*

The **TRUTH:** The Confederacy never really stood a chance. The Union barely started to maximize the use of its industry and population.

Myth #3: *The South Will Rise Again!*

The **TRUTH:** It has been 150 years since the end of the Civil War, and the South hasn't tried to secede a second time.

Myth #4: *The Confederate flag is a symbol of “heritage” and “independence”.*

The **TRUTH:** It is... to some people; but symbolism is a tricky thing, because it depends on your perspective.

- Segregation, and the Lost Cause mythology would continue to define the South right up to the Civil Rights era of the 1950s and '60s.
- Today, 150 years after the Civil War, the Myth of the Lost Cause continues to be a powerful force in America.