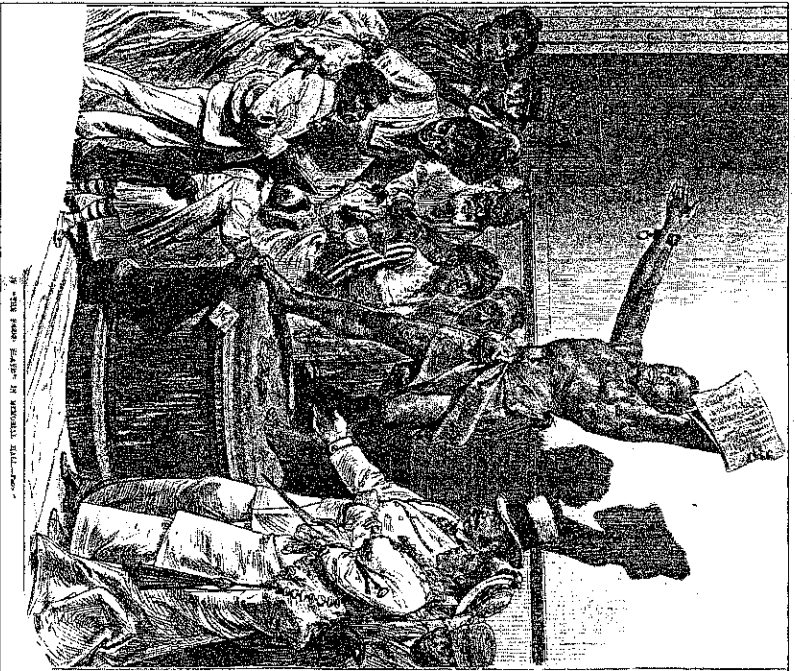


is riding in a declamation of something from Victor Hugo, one longs to clap him back into hopeless bondage."



But as an engraving published in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* attested—itsself a unique pictorial report on the fair—the statue was a magnet for African American visitors of all classes, a powerful visual symbol from abroad that commemorated their hard-fought achievements and, even in the face of violence and faltering federal commitment, their persistent aspirations. The statue (which was returned to Thiéste, where it is now housed in the Museo Revoltella, Galleria d'Arte Moderna) was to have no counterpart in the United States for more than a generation.

CHAPTER SIX

THE FACTS OF RECONSTRUCTION

ON THE NIGHT OF October 29, 1869, some thirty disguised men appeared at the home of Abram Colby, an African American who represented Greene County in the Georgia legislature. "They broke my door open," Colby later told a congressional committee investigating the Ku Klux Klan, "took me out of bed, took me to the woods and whipped me three hours or more and left me for dead." Born a slave in Georgia, the son of his owner, Colby had been freed in 1851 and subsequently earned his living as a barber, laborer, and minister. During Reconstruction, he became one of the many thousands who "shouldered the responsibilities" of freedom, in the words of his Alabama contemporary James K. Green. He also represented the threat that freedom posed to the power structure of the Old South.

The assault on Colby took place just as biracial governments were assuming power in every state of the old Confederacy. Overall, these Reconstruction governments present a mixed picture of achievement and failure. Yet their very existence represented a radical transformation in southern life. Radical Reconstruction was a stunning experiment in the nineteenth-century world, the only attempt by a national government in league with emancipated slaves to fashion an interracial democracy from a slave society. In some ways the era's most remarkable development was how Reconstruction affected day-to-day life in local communities. In matters both prosaic and significant, the presence of sympathetic Republican officials made a real difference in the lives of former slaves. By 1870, hundreds of black men were serving as police and justices of the peace and on juries throughout the South, ensuring that whites were prosecuted for crimes against blacks and that black defendants received a modicum of fairness in court. The appearance of black sheriffs, school board officials, and tax assessors in plantation regions—sometimes former slaves evaluating the property of their former owners—symbolized the political revolution wrought

by Reconstruction. The assault on Abram Colby, one of countless such incidents during Reconstruction, typified the dangers faced by politically active African Americans. The reaction against Reconstruction was so extreme because the extent of political and social change was so unprecedented.

Colby was typical of local leaders elected to political office once the South's African Americans won the right to vote. Even before the coming of black suffrage, in 1867, Colby had emerged as an outspoken advocate of his fellow freedpeople. In 1866, he organized one of the largest branches of the Georgia Equal Rights Association. On a number of occasions that year, he complained to the Freedmen's Bureau about the myriad injustices suffered by the former slaves. In one petition he asked that blacks in Greene County be empowered to settle disputes among themselves, since they did not enjoy "the most distant shadow of right or equal justice" in the courts of Presidential Reconstruction. Local whites offered him five thousand dollars to abandon his activism. "I told them," Colby related, "I would not do it if they give me all the county was worth." In 1868, Colby was elected to the Georgia legislature.

What brought down the wrath of the Klan, according to the local agent of the American Missionary Association, was that Colby had gone to Atlanta to urge the new state government to provide protection against violence for the area's African Americans, "and [they] had besides as they said, many old scores against him as a leader of the people." Among his assailants, Colby recognized some of the "first-class men in our town. One is a lawyer, one a doctor, and some are farmers." They asked him, he related, "Do you think you will ever vote another damned radical ticket?" I said, 'I will not tell a lie. . . . If there was an election tomorrow, I would vote the radical ticket.' They set in and whipped me a thousand licks more." Colby's wife and young daughter witnessed the entire affair. The girl, Colby told the congressional committee, was almost literally frightened to death. "She never got over it until she died. That was the part that grieves me the most."

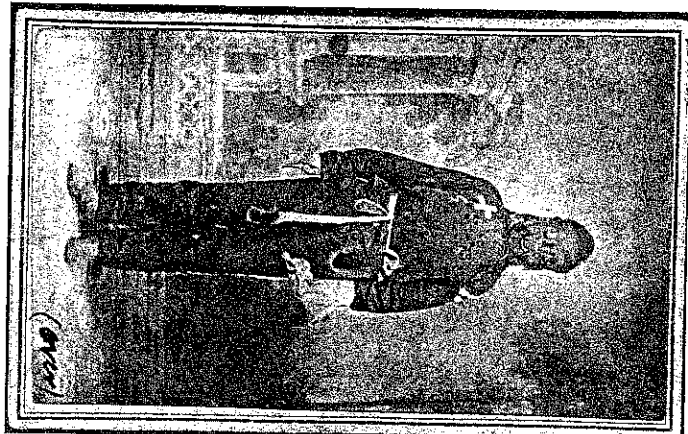
Well into the twentieth century, historians hostile to Reconstruction castigated the era as a time of "Negro rule." The phrase captured white southerners' sense of living through a terrifying social and political revolution (one that perhaps evoked fear of another Haiti, where in the 1790s slaves had overthrown the slave system and massacred thousands of whites), but did not accurately describe the makeup of Reconstruction government. In most of the South, the reins of power remained largely in white hands. Half the black officials who served during Reconstruction lived in three states—South Carolina, Louisiana, and Mississippi, where African Americans comprised a majority of the population. In the case of South Carolina and

Louisiana, large communities of blacks who had been free before the Civil War stood ready to assume a role in Reconstruction government. Even there, however, African Americans initially accepted a smaller share of offices than their proportion of the party's electorate seemed to entitle them to.

At the top echelons of Reconstruction politics, power remained in white hands. In Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, no African American held a major office during Reconstruction. Even in Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina, every Reconstruction governor was white (with the brief exception of P. B. S. Pinchback, the lieutenant governor of Louisiana, who became governor for one month when his predecessor was impeached), and only one, Jonathan J. Wright of South Carolina, won a seat on a state supreme court. Moreover, with white Republicans much better connected with national party leaders than African Americans, whites controlled lucrative federal patronage appointments, the oil of the nineteenth century's party machinery.

Nonetheless, the appearance of African Americans in positions of political power a few years after the end of slavery represented a truly radical transformation in southern and American history. Not only was the old ruling class stripped of political power, but most Reconstruction officeholders, whether white or black, now depended for their positions on the votes of former slaves. Many contemporary observers truly believed that they were living through a revolution.

Unprecedented challenges confronted these new Reconstruction governments. In addition to the mammoth problems of a society devastated by



A captured member of the Ku Klux Klan poses for a Holly Springs, Mississippi, photographer after turning state's evidence in the 1871 prosecution of Klan members.

war and bankrupt state treasuries, the governments had to deal with the consequences of emancipation while consolidating a political party that had not even existed in the region a year or two earlier. They faced opponents who monopolized the South's remaining wealth and political experience, denied the very legitimacy of the new regimes and their black voters, and proved quite willing to resort to violence to reassert their positions of power. Given the daunting problems faced by the Reconstruction governments, their accomplishments were indeed remarkable.

Although the course of Reconstruction varied considerably from state to state, three interrelated issues dominated southern politics in these years: education, race, relations, and economic policy. Schooling reflected the more general expansion of governmental activism and responsibility during Reconstruction. The creation of tax-supported public school systems in every state of the South stood as one of Reconstruction's most enduring accomplishments. Despite the immense cost of building a new system virtually from scratch and serving a newly doubled citizenry, a public system of education gradually took shape, benefiting both white children and former slaves. By 1875, in states such as South Carolina and Mississippi, half the children of both races were attending public schools. African Americans' thirst for education, so evident at the dawn of freedom, did not diminish during Reconstruction. Young and old flocked to the new schools. A northern reporter in Vicksburg in 1873 observed that "female negro-servants make it a condition before accepting a situation, that they should have permission to attend the night-schools."

Nearly all the schools established in Reconstruction were racially separate. The new state constitutions and laws did not require segregation—as they would after the end of Reconstruction—but white parents overwhelmingly refused to send their children to be educated alongside blacks. Black parents seem to be concerned more with access to the education long denied their families, an equitable division of school funds, and the employment, where possible, of black teachers than with the composition of the student body. One remarkable experiment in integrated education did take place in New Orleans, where the free-black leadership made the racial integration of all public institutions a major priority. Here, thousands of black and white children attended mixed schools by the mid-1870s. Generally, however, whether blacks or whites controlled local boards of education, the schools established during Reconstruction were segregated by race. This was also true for higher education. With the exception of the University of South Carolina, which in 1873 admitted Henry E. Hayne to its medical school (whereupon a majority of the white students withdrew,

along with much of the faculty), existing colleges remained all white. These were supplemented by institutions for blacks such as Alcorn, Southern, and Fisk universities, founded by churches, northern aid societies, or the new state governments. Other state institutions also separated people by race. Even the South Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind had separate classes for whites and blacks. Thus, as one historian puts it, "color was distinguished where no color was seen."

But if black parents and leaders seem to have accepted racial segregation in schooling, they simultaneously demanded equal treatment in other realms of public life, especially transportation and public accommodation. Black officials and businessmen deeply resented their widespread exclusion from restaurants, hotels, theaters, and first-class railroad cars. As John M. Brown, a Mississippi sheriff, complained, "Education amounts to nothing, good behavior counts for nothing, even money cannot buy for a colored man or woman decent treatment and the comforts that white people claim and can obtain." Even ordinary freedpeople who could not afford to patronize a fine restaurant or hotel viewed the demeaning treatment meted out to their elected representatives as an insult to the entire black community.

Several of the new state governments outlawed racial discrimination by such businesses. These civil rights measures broke entirely new legal ground. They had no precedent in pre-Civil War American law and roused deep resentment among white Democrats. Many native-born white Republicans also insisted that "social equality" should remain a private matter, beyond the legitimate reach of government. Between 1868 and 1870, moderate Republican governors James I. Alcorn of Mississippi, Harrison Reed of Florida, and Henry C. Warmoth of Louisiana vetoed bills barring railroad companies and other businesses from discriminating against black patrons. On the other hand, South Carolina in 1869 enacted a sweeping series of laws imposing fines and prison terms on those who operated public accommodations that treated citizens unequally. As black influence in the Republican Party grew in the early 1870s, a majority of the southern states passed measures guaranteeing all citizens "full and equal rights" in access to transportation and places of public entertainment and business. Such laws proved difficult to enforce, but they reflected African Americans' vision of a color-blind society in which all citizens would enjoy the same treatment before the law and in all realms of public life.

The third preoccupation of Reconstruction politics, economic policy, revealed how much Republican rule changed southern government but also highlighted the enduring tensions within the party. For the first time in southern history, legislatures sought to bolster the economic power of



Trafficking in racist caricature, this 1874 cartoon also captures the unprecedented nature of antidiscriminatory legislation. "But I don't want to sleep with a Negro," exclaims a guest when confronted by the proprietor of a crowded hotel. "Well, it's the only double bed in the house," is the response, "and if I don't give him half of it I shall have to pay him five hundred dollars damages. You may either sleep with him or go into the street."

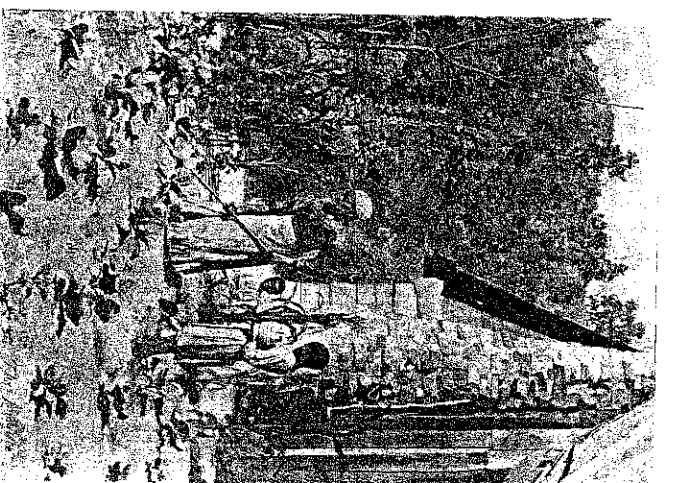
States," a South Carolina planter complained in 1872, "ample protection is afforded to tenants and very little to landlords."

When it came to the former slaves' continuing quest for land, however, Reconstruction governments took few concrete actions. South Carolina did establish a state land commission, which purchased farms for resale to black families on generous terms. By 1876, perhaps one-seventh of the state's African Americans, along with a handful of poor whites, had been settled on land of their own. But Republicans in Washington, along with many party leaders in the South, still adhered to the idea that advancement must come through individual initiative rather than governmental fiat. As a result, the hopes of the mass of the South's freedpeople for land of their own remained unfulfilled. Instead, by the early 1870s, the system of sharecropping had come to dominate agriculture in the cotton South—a system in which individual black families rented portions of a plantation and split

labors rather than of planters. Lawmakers swept away the remnants of the Black Codes, with their coercive apprenticeship systems and limits on the former slaves' economic options. They enacted measures that gave agricultural workers, rather than other creditors, first claim on an employer's assets when payment was due. They prohibited the discharge of laborers for political reasons and required that, in the event of eviction, sharecroppers be compensated for work they had already done. "Now there is a law that allows a man to get what he works for," commented Florida black legislator Robert Meacham—quite a change from the days of slavery or even Presidential Reconstruction. "Under the laws of most of the Southern States," ample protection is

the crop with the landowner at the end of the year. Sharecropping offered blacks considerable day-to-day autonomy in their working and social lives. No longer did they labor under the direction of an employer or overseer, and no longer could a white person determine whether women and children worked in the fields. Yet given the falling price of cotton and the high cost of credit from local merchants, sharecropping offered few farmers a route to landownership.

Rather than pursuing direct action to uplift the poor, Reconstruction governments invested their hopes for change in a program of regional economic development, with railroad construction as its centerpiece. There was nothing unusual in governmental promotion of economic activity in nineteenth-century America. Before the Civil War, state and local authorities throughout the country had helped to finance all sorts of economic enterprises. But the scope and ambition of Reconstruction aid differed markedly from precedents in the South. Before the war, southern railroads had served as adjuncts to the plantation system. Their primary purpose was to facilitate getting cotton to market. During Reconstruction, however, Republicans hoped to create a far larger and more integrated railroad network, to spur the emergence of a diversified economy of booming factories, bustling towns, and a diversified agriculture freed from the plantation's dominance. This, in turn, would offer black and white southerners far more opportunities for economic advancement. "A free and living republic," said one Ten-

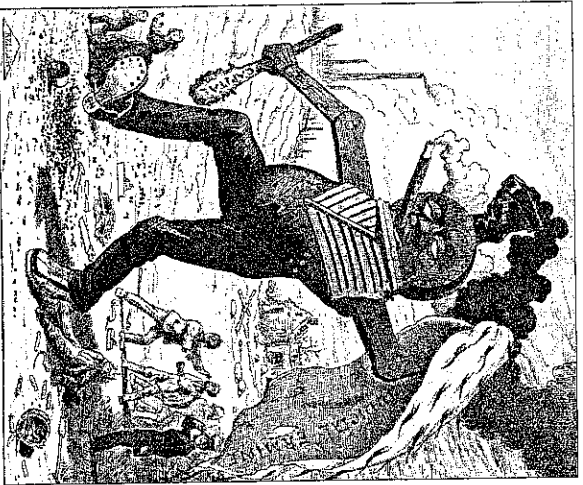


While many white artists dabbled in romantic visions of the rural South, Thomas Anshutz's 1879 The Way They Live captured the hardship of subsistence farming in the post-Reconstruction South.

nessee Republican, would "spring up in the track of the railroad as inevitably, as surely as grass and flowers follow in the spring."

The new state governments offered generous financial aid to railroad companies that pledged to begin construction in the South. They also used tax incentives and direct assistance to lure northern investment in factories and other enterprises. Many Democrats, who sat on the boards of regional railroad companies, supported these measures. Black lawmakers, like white, pressed for aid to projects that promised to benefit their constituents. In the end, however, the railroad program failed to fulfill its promise. Between 1868 and 1872, more than three thousand miles of track were laid in the South, but this progress was largely confined to Georgia, Alabama, Arkansas, and Texas. The other states had little to show for their generosity to railroad companies except rising debts. Overall, expenditures on economic development produced rising state budgets and tax rates and declining state credit, but few significant benefits.

The entire railroad program, moreover, was marred by corruption. The rapid growth of state budgets, because of the new school systems and economic development programs, and the benefits to be gained from state aid



Inspired by Mary Shelley's novel about a man-made monster, this cartoon depicts the railroad as "The American Frankenstein" trampling the rights of the American people.

led to a scramble for influence that produced bribery, insider dealing, and a get-rich-quick atmosphere. Given the prevailing "social discord," commented one New Yorker, the South was "the last region on earth in which a Northern or European capitalist [would] invest a dollar." With political instability deterring many northern investors (who preferred to put their capital in the more tranquil West), the South attracted marginal and often shady entrepreneurs who were willing to pay off state officials for a share of

governmental largesse but were prone to pocketing state aid rather than actually using it for railroad construction.

Reconstruction's opponents, and generations of subsequent historians, seized on the corruption issue to castigate blacks as "unfit" for the right to vote. Bribery and favoritism, however, were hardly confined to the Reconstruction South. This was the era, after all, of the Tweed Ring, which pilaged New York City's municipal coffers, and the Whiskey Ring, Crédit Mobilier scandal, and other frauds that brought down members of President Grant's cabinet and leading members of Congress. Moreover, if some Republicans, black and white, participated in corruption, by the early 1870s others were leading drives that cleaned up public life and effectively put an end to the program of railroad aid that had spawned the illicit gains. But corruption handed Reconstruction's opponents a way of discrediting the new southern governments, and it also drained away money that could more usefully have been spent on schools and other regional needs.

Given the unprecedented challenges and intense opposition Republican leaders faced, political unity should have been their first priority. Yet factionalism weakened the party in many states. In some cases, walkouts and fistfights marred Republican conventions. In Louisiana, the Republican legislature impeached the Republican governor; in Alabama, Governor William H. Smith and Senator George Spencer, both Republicans, headed rival factions that competed for federal patronage. Moderate Republican governors such as Robert K. Scott of South Carolina and James Alcorn of Mississippi sought to expand the party's base of support by appointing white Democrats to office, to the dismay of loyal Republicans. Scalwags complained that carpetbaggers were monopolizing important positions and connections to party leaders in Washington. The precarious economic position of most Republican leaders intensified the struggle for office. Carpetbagger, scalawag, and black alike, they depended on office for their livelihoods.

The party infighting increasingly alarmed black leaders. Although in cities such as New Orleans and Mobile considerable friction emerged between prewar free blacks and former slaves, black politicians generally seemed to place a greater premium on party unity than did their white counterparts. Nonetheless, as time went on, they became more assertive in party affairs, even if it meant offending white Republicans. At the outset of Republican rule, white leaders urged blacks to moderate their claims to office, so as not to alienate white voters. At first, black leaders heeded such pleas. In Georgia, they "went from door to door in the 'negro belt,' " seeking whites who would stand as Republican candidates. Increasingly, how-

ever, they became unwilling to accept the role of junior partners in the Republican coalition.

By the early 1870s, black leaders demanded a larger share of political power, especially in states where former slaves comprised a majority of the electorate. Of the sixteen blacks who sat in Congress during Reconstruction, most were elected during the 1870s. In South Carolina, black leaders in 1870 demanded and received half the eight executive offices. The number of black lawmakers increased steadily, until by the mid-1870s they made up a majority of the South Carolina legislature. In Mississippi, black leaders opposed to Governor Alcorn's conciliatory policy toward former Whigs like himself and to his refusal to approve civil rights legislation organized former Union general Adelbert Ames's successful run for governor in 1873. At the local level, too, blacks became dissatisfied with being used as "stepping stones to office" by whites. The growing black presence in office reflected the maturing of grassroots politics in black communities across the South. But it drove a number of white Republicans (Alcorn included) into the ranks of the Democrats.

During Reconstruction, enclaves of black political power existed throughout the South. In Edgefield County, South Carolina, blacks held the offices of sheriff, magistrate, school commissioner, and officer of the state militia. In the plantation belt along the Mississippi River, blacks by the early 1870s had taken control of county boards of supervisors. They raised taxes on plantation lands, established schools and charitable institutions, and embarked on road building and other construction projects to improve black communities. Many local black leaders were remarkably young. Most of Edgefield County's black officials had not reached the age of twenty-five when they assumed office. Indeed, by the early 1870s, a new generation of political leaders began to replace the organizers of 1865-67. In St. Landry Parish, Louisiana, for example, freedmen in 1873 for the first time outnumbered the freedborn on the Republican executive committee.

In some areas, Reconstruction altered the balance of power between laborers and employers at the local level. Planters throughout the South complained that Republican officials did nothing to discourage vagrancy and theft and that they interfered in plantation disputes on behalf of former slaves. Unlike in the days of slavery and Presidential Reconstruction, planters could not turn to the state to impose discipline on their labor force. In Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana, the parish court in 1869 ordered a sugar planter to sell his crop in order to settle back wages owed to his laborers, even if his other debts remained unpaid. Local authorities employed blacks, whites, and Chinese laborers to work repairing the Mississippi River lev-

ees. In a repudiation of previous practice, all received the same wages. As the chief engineer reported, whites "were a little disgusted at not being allowed double (colored) wages, and the Chinamen were astonished at being allowed as much and the American citizens of African descent were delighted at being 'par.'"

One of the most compelling stories of the Reconstruction era took place in McIntosh County, Georgia. There, in the heart of the antebellum rice kingdom, the home of some of the state's wealthiest aristocrats, trial justice Tunis G. Campbell established a center of black political power that left local planters complaining of being rendered "powerless" to enforce discipline among their workers. Campbell had a long career of activism. A native of New Jersey, he had been educated in New York and worked at various times as a barber, minister, and hotel steward. He participated before the Civil War in campaigns for black suffrage, abolitionism, and temperance, and had helped to establish African American schools and churches.

Campbell came to Beaufort, on the South Carolina Sea Islands, in 1863, "to instruct and elevate the colored race," bringing with him three thousand dollars of his own money. Two years later, while employed by the Freedmen's Bureau, he organized black settlements on St. Catherine's and Sapelo islands in Georgia, complete with their own governments, militia units, and schools, and divided land among the former slaves. When the bureau dissolved his Republic of St. Catherine's, Campbell moved to the mainland, where he rented a plantation from a Unionist white landowner and leased small plots to black families. Campbell won election both as a member of the state senate from McIntosh County and as a local justice of the peace. He appointed black constables to assist him, insisted that juries include an equal number of black and white members, and ordered the arrest of employers accused of abusing or cheating their laborers.

So significant was this kind of transformation of political power at the local level that constituents invested Republican officeholders with even more authority than they really possessed. John R. Lynch—a slave in Louisiana freed by the Union army in 1864, educated in a Natchez, Mississippi, school established by northern aid societies, and appointed justice of the peace by military governor Ames in 1869—wrote about his experiences in *The Facts of Reconstruction* (1913), one of the first works to challenge the then-dominant portrayal of Reconstruction as a time of corruption and misgovernment. Lynch recalled how the former slaves "magnified" his office "far beyond its importance," bringing him cases ranging from disputes with their employers to family quarrels. Ordinary Republicans of



John R. Lynch

both races also deluged the South's new governors with letters detailing their grievances and aspirations, requesting financial assistance, and seeking advice about all kinds of public and private matters. "We consider ourselves under your protection [and] care," one family wrote to William W. Holden, the Republican governor of North Carolina. In part, such letters reflected the political inexperience of so much of the southern Republican electorate, black and white alike. But they also poignantly revealed that whatever the new governments' failures, the aspirations of the former slaves for a better life depended on the survival of Radical Reconstruction.

By the early 1870s, biracial democratic government, something unprecedented in American history, was functioning throughout the South. Grounded in the families, churches, schools, and political institutions of the black community—the institutional infrastructure originating in slavery and consolidated after emancipation—former slaves continued to exercise a powerful political activism and exercised a considerable degree of political power. Meanwhile, the old planter elite had been exicted from political power.

Years later, a black Reconstruction legislator in South Carolina named Thomas Miller would recall the era's achievements: "We were eight years in power. We had built schoolhouses, established charitable institutions, built and maintained the penitentiary system, provided for the education of the deaf and dumb . . . rebuilt the bridges and reestablished the ferries. In short, we had reconstructed the State and placed it upon the road to prosperity." In enumerating Reconstruction's accomplishments, Miller failed to note its shortcomings, among them political corruption and party factionalism. Most important, former slaves by and large remained desperately poor, and their desire for land had not been fulfilled.

Yet even as Reconstruction's failures betrayed the hopes that African Americans had invested in the new governments, the very existence of this experiment in interracial democracy was anathema to those accustomed to controlling the South's destiny. Undererred by federal and state laws and the rewritten Constitution, they launched a violent campaign to bring Reconstruction to an end.

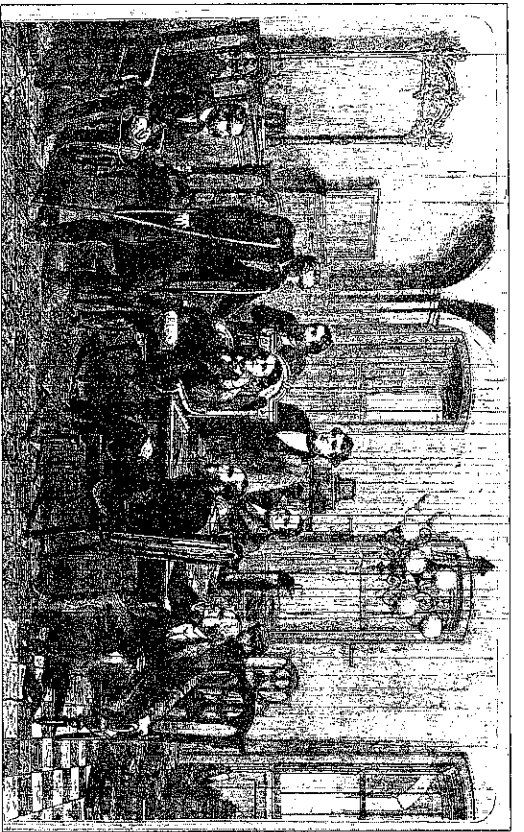
Violence, of course, was an intrinsic element of the slave system and had been endemic in large parts of the South since 1865. In the immediate aftermath of the Civil War, it was localized and seemingly random, directed against individual freedmen who acted in ways that flouted the conventions of slavery and especially against those unwilling to work under conditions dictated by whites. Sometimes, as in the Memphis and New Orleans riots of 1866, violence swept over entire communities. But the coming to power of Republican governments stimulated its rapid expansion.

The depredations of the Ku Klux Klan and kindred groups such as the White Brotherhood and the Knights of the White Camellia were more organized and more overtly political than earlier violence, not only in the sense of aiming to influence elections and overturn Reconstruction governments, but also in seeking to affect power relations between the races throughout the South. One victim complained of a "reign of terror" in his county, and, indeed, the Klan during Reconstruction offers the most extensive example of homegrown terrorism in American history.

In 1870, the Senate and House of Representatives authorized investigations into the problem. They sent a joint committee into the South to take testimony from public officials, army officers, victims of violence, and, on occasion, Klansmen themselves. Widely reported in the press, the Ku Klux Klan hearings of 1870–71, which yielded thirteen thick volumes of firsthand testimony, revealed to the country an almost incredible campaign of criminal violence by whites determined to punish black leaders, disrupt the Republican Party, reestablish control over the black labor force, and restore white supremacy in every phase of southern life. The Klan concentrated its attacks on the individuals and institutions responsible for the dramatic changes in southern society resulting from Radical Reconstruction.

Testimony by friends of murder victims and by survivors of Klan attacks revealed the organization's methods and the kind of individuals who became its targets. Abram Colby was only one of numerous black leaders who told the investigators of having to face daily threats of violence. Scores received death threats, were driven from their homes, or were assaulted or murdered. In parts of the South, black leaders lived, as Congressman Richard H. Cain of South Carolina noted, "in constant fear."

Frequently, the Klan set out to destroy the Union League and the local Republican Party. Jack Dupree was murdered in Monroe County, Mississippi, in 1870 because he was "president of a republican club" and was known as a man who "would speak his mind." The Klan's purposes, however, were not confined to electoral politics. In a sense, the organization took on the function of the antebellum slave patrols: making sure that blacks



Members of a Senate committee hear the testimony of a New York schoolteacher who was tortured by the Ku Klux Klan.

did not violate the rules and etiquette of white supremacy. "They do not like to see the Negro go ahead," commented a white farmer from Mississippi. Frequently, blacks who had managed to acquire land became targets of reprisal, as did laborers who stood up for their rights on plantations. Victims included a black woman whipped for "laziness" and freedmen beaten for "suing white men" in court. In Noxubee County, Mississippi, according to a former Confederate officer, the Klan aimed "to keep them from renting land, so that the majority of the white citizens may control labor." In 1869, Georgia Klansmen lynched a freedman and his wife accused of "resenting a blow from their employer," and murdered a blacksmith who refused to work for a white employer until being paid for previous labor.

"There is an eternal hatred," observed a committee of Tennessee lawmakers in 1868, "existing against all men that voted the Republican ticket, or who belong to the Loyal League, or [are] engaged in teaching schools, and giving instruction to the humbler class of their fellow men." Ministers, teachers, and other African Americans who sought to uplift their people became targets of violence. In the first half of 1871 alone, Klansmen destroyed twenty-six schools in Monroe County, Mississippi. A white mob attacked the home of South Carolina freedman Thomas S. Jones and drove him to seek refuge "in swamps and woods," because, he related, "they say I shall not teach school any longer." Another group of victims were black men accused of showing disrespect for white women or, in some cases, of

sexual assault (although in most instances, the latter charge was invented after the fact to justify the acts of violence).

Some locales gained a national reputation for extreme violence. One was Jackson County, in the Florida Panhandle. "That is where Satan has his seat," remarked a black clergyman; more than 150 persons were murdered in Jackson, including black political leaders and Samuel Fleischman, a Jewish merchant resented by local whites for voting Republican and dealing fairly with black customers. As Fleischman's fate demonstrates, while the large majority of victims of violence were black, whites associated with Reconstruction or deemed to have violated the Klan's definition of proper relations between the races were also terrorized. Hundreds of Republicans were whipped and saw their property destroyed in Spartanburg County, in the largely white upcountry of South Carolina. White women who violated the taboo against "miscegenation" by engaging in sexual liaisons or establishing long-term relationships with black men sometimes suffered violent reprisals. Klansmen murdered three white Republican members of the Georgia legislature and drove ten others from their homes. "They bear and cut me with knives," reported one white victim, a teacher in a black school, "for I had often spoken of the colored people of this place and said they ought to have learning the same as the whites. . . . I am in for equal rights and that was the cause they done me so."

On occasion, violence escalated from assaults on individuals to mass terrorism or even local insurrections. On the day after Republicans carried Laurens County, South Carolina, in the election of 1870, armed bands of whites scoured the countryside, driving 150 blacks from their homes and killing thirteen, including a member of the legislature. In Meridian, Mississippi, rioting in 1871 left some thirty blacks dead, including "all the leading colored men of the town with one or two exceptions." The bloodiest single act of carnage in Reconstruction took place in Colfax, Louisiana, in 1873, where fifty or more members of a black militia unit were massacred after surrendering to armed whites who had assaulted the town with a small cannon.

Klansmen frequently disguised themselves while committing illegal acts (they wore no standard costume; their familiar white robe and head-dress is a twentieth-century invention). Nonetheless, like Abram Colby, many victims were able to identify their assailants. Although criminals who traveled at night tended to be mainly young single men, the Klan included many men of substance—planters, lawyers, newspaper editors, merchants, even ministers. "The most respectable citizens are engaged in it," reported an agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, "if there can be any respectability about such people." A number of former Confederate generals served as Klan



Freedpeople hiding in the Louisiana swamps

leaders, among them John B. Gordon, Democratic candidate for governor in Georgia in 1868.

Of course, most white southerners did not commit criminal acts, and some spoke out against the Klan. But the large majority of southern whites remained silent. Indeed, the Democratic Party's constant vilification of carpetbaggers and scalawags as corrupt incompetents, their insistence that blacks were unfit for equal citizenship, and their public laments about the intractability of black labor created an atmosphere that made violence seem a legitimate response in the eyes of many white southerners. Community support for the Klan extended to lawyers who represented the criminals in court, editors who established funds for their defense, and the innumerable women who sewed costumes and disguises for them. While most white southerners were law-abiding citizens, they seemed willing to forgive the Klan's excesses because they shared the organization's ultimate goal—the overthrow of Reconstruction and the restoration of white supremacy.

The widespread violence posed a difficult dilemma for Republicans, north and south. By the early 1870s, very few federal troops remained in the South—in Louisiana, for example, they numbered fewer than five hundred. In states such as Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas, where they could draw on a considerable force of white Republicans, Reconstruction

governors mobilized the militia and dealt effectively with the Klan. In some localities, blacks succeeded in banding together to fight the Klan, relying on the paramilitary organization that had sprung up around the Union Leagues. In 1868, armed members of the Union League patrolled the streets of Wilmington, North Carolina, and succeeded in enforcing order against Klan threats to disrupt the election to ratify the new state constitution.

Generally, however, the scale of violence outstripped the response of the new and weak Reconstruction governments, and of ad hoc local arrangements. Republican governors such as James L. Alcorn of Mississippi, William H. Smith of Alabama, and Henry C. Warmoth of Louisiana hoped to expand their base of support among white voters. They proved extremely reluctant to deploy a predominantly black militia, fearing this would further alienate local whites. Warmoth did create the Metropolitan Police Force, commanded by former Confederate general James Longstreet, to keep order in New Orleans, but failed to take action against violence in rural parts of the state.

Part of the problem was that blacks took democratic and legal procedures more seriously than did Reconstruction's opponents. To be sure, blacks sometimes intimidated, ostracized, or assaulted fellow freedmen who wished to vote Democratic. But no Republicans rode at night to murder their political foes. "We could burn their churches and schoolhouses," wrote one former slave from a violent section of Georgia, "but we don't want to break the law or harm anybody. All we want is to live under the law."

Increasingly, Reconstruction governors appealed to Washington for aid. Only "power from without," said one southern Republican leader, could restore order and save Reconstruction. In the early 1870s, national Republican leaders responded. "I am willing," said Senator John Sherman of Ohio, "to . . . again appeal to the power of the nation to crush, as we once before have done, this organized civil war." In 1870 and 1871, Congress enacted three Enforcement Acts, meant to suppress violence in the South. Most sweeping was the Ku Klux Klan Act of 1871, one of the most far-reaching measures of the Reconstruction era. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments and the Civil Rights Act of 1866 had been directed primarily against discriminatory action by state and local governments. Now, for the first time in American history, certain crimes committed by individuals were declared offenses punishable under federal law, including conspiracies to deprive citizens of the right to vote, hold office, serve on juries, and enjoy the equal protection of the laws. The KKK Act allowed the president to sus-

pend the writ of habeas corpus (that is, to have individuals arrested and held without charge) and use the army to suppress Klan violence.

Traditionally, private criminal acts had been punished under state law. The unprecedented expansion of the federal government's criminal jurisdiction outraged Democrats and alarmed even some Republicans in the North. The Ku Klux Klan Act, complained *The Nation*, armed the federal government with power "over a class of cases of which it has never hitherto had, and never pretended to have, any jurisdiction whatever." To most Republicans, however, the act seemed a logical extension of the expansion of national power wrought by the Civil War and already embodied in Reconstruction legislation. "If the federal government," asked former Union army general Benjamin F. Butler, now representing Massachusetts in Congress, "cannot pass laws to protect the rights, liberty, and lives of citizens . . . why were guarantees of those fundamental rights put in the Constitution at all?" Black congressmen staunchly supported the new measures. While Democrats charged Congress with violating constitutional guarantees of state autonomy, a black Republican member of the House of Representatives, Joseph Ranney of South Carolina, responded: "Tell me nothing of a constitution which fails to shelter beneath its rightful power the people of a country." Robert B. Elliott, another black congressman from South Carolina, caustically noted that Klan violence



Members of the Ku Klux Klan of Moore County, North Carolina, prepare to execute a victim in August 1871.

refuted southern whites' claims to superior morality and a higher level of civilization. "Pray tell me," he asked, "who is the barbarian here?"

Employing the powers of the Enforcement Acts, President Grant in 1871 sent federal marshals into the South to crush the Ku Klux Klan. The marshals arrested hundreds of men. While most escaped punishment by promising to desist

from violent activities, leaders of the organization went on trial in federal court and some received prison sentences. In South Carolina, Grant suspended the writ of habeas corpus in nine upcountry counties. Federal troops occupied the area and arrested perhaps two thousand Klansmen. A few dozen of the worst offenders were indicted; most pleaded guilty and went to prison. By 1872, the reign of terror was, temporarily at least, over. The election of that year was the most peaceful in the entire Reconstruction era. But violence had helped Democrats regain political control in Tennessee (in 1870) and Georgia (in 1871) and had destroyed the infrastructure of the Union Leagues in local communities in many parts of the South.

Even as the Grant administration acted decisively against violence in the South, it confronted new challenges in the North. With the question of Reconstruction supposedly settled, new political questions came to the fore, as industrial workers demanded that state governments enact laws guaranteeing an eight-hour workday and farmers sought state intervention to combat what they considered unfair practices by railroads. These groups in the North called on the activist state spawned by the Civil War and Reconstruction to redress their own grievances, and they sought to extend the Reconstruction principle of equality into economic relations within the North.

The rise of these issues reflected the North's own transformation during the Civil War era. Although hardly as sweeping as the destruction of slavery in the South, the North experienced an economic revolution of its own, as manufacturing output expanded rapidly and the railroad knitted the country into a single giant market. The rapid expansion of agriculture, mining, and railroad construction in the trans-Mississippi West exemplified the shift from Lincoln's America—the world of the small farm and artisan workshop—to a *future industrial society*. As in the South, the sudden appearance of large corporations seeking favors from the state fueled political corruption. "The galleries and lobbies of every Legislature," one Illinois Republican complained, "are thronged with men seeking to procure an advantage" for one economic interest or another. Frequently, they were successful. Northern legislatures awarded thousands of special grants and privileges to railroad, manufacturing, and mining companies, often businesses in which key lawmakers held stock or directorships. Increasingly, the Republican Party was taking on a new identity along with its cherished history of preserving the Union and emancipating the slaves; it developed closer and closer ties to business corporations and, through railroad land grants, high tariffs, and other largesse, sought to promote business interests and economic development.

The presidential campaign of 1872 revealed the impact of these changes

on the Republican Party, and on northern perceptions of Reconstruction. A key group of party leaders was more and more estranged from the Grant administration. They included influential founders of the Republican Party such as Carl Schurz of Missouri and Lyman Trumbull of Illinois, and prominent editors and journalists such as E. L. Godkin of *The Nation* and Samuel Bowles of the *Springfield Republican*. Initially, their dissatisfaction with the Grant administration had little to do with Reconstruction. These self-styled "best men" were alarmed by the corruption that seemed to pervade northern politics, and by what they considered the degradation of a party increasingly under the control of local political machines and bosses and susceptible to manipulation by the corporate elite. These reformers also found disturbing the rising tide of labor and farmer unrest in the North. Now that the legal framework of equality had been achieved, they insisted, the government should step back and let the economy develop according to its own internal laws. Corporate demands for land grants and high tariffs, labor's call for an eight-hour day, and laws passed by certain western states attempting to regulate railroad rates all represented, in the reformers' eyes, illegitimate examples of "special legislation"—measures that violated the principle of equality by favoring one interest in society over others.

This combination of machine politics, political corruption, and new demands on government spurred reformers to action. Some were former Radical Republicans, firmly committed to the Reconstruction agenda of equal rights for all. But by 1870, Radical Republicanism as a coherent political movement was rapidly disintegrating. Stevens had died, and veteran Radicals such as Benjamin F. Wade of Ohio and George Julian of Indiana failed to win reelection. Unlike during the battle with Andrew Johnson, divisions between Radicals and moderates no longer defined groupings within the Republican Party. More important was one's relationship to the Grant administration and attitudes toward the role of government itself.

Much of the degradation of politics, the reformers believed, resulted from the power of demagogues who thrived on corruption and played on the misguided desire of working-class voters for government action on their behalf. The solution was somehow to oust the bosses from power and place government in the hands of educated men devoted to the public good—the reformers themselves. One way to do this would be to reduce the number of those eligible to vote. "Expressions of doubt and distrust in regard to universal suffrage are heard constantly," one journalist commented. Reformers recognized that measures such as property qualifications for voting, abandoned in every state before the Civil War, stood little chance of enactment. More viable was their most cherished proposal—

eliminating party patronage by basing appointment to government posts on competitive examinations, not political connections.

Initially, the reform revolt had little to do with Reconstruction. Increasingly, however, the language in which anti-Grant Republicans condemned northern politics echoed white complaints against the new governments in the South. The alleged corruption of carpetbaggers seemed to parallel the depredations of political bosses in the North. Black demands for land seemed analogous to northern labor's pressure for legislation on its own behalf. Complaints by the South's planters, merchants, and prewar politicians that the region's "natural leaders" had been excluded from power in favor of "ignorance, stupidity and vice" (the words of a declaration by South Carolina Democrats in 1868) paralleled the reformers' sense that less-than-able men had pushed themselves to the side in the North. Violence and corruption in the South, reformers became convinced, arose from the fact that Reconstruction had not won the allegiance of "the part of the community that embodies the intelligence and the capital." By 1872, anti-Grant Republicans had concluded that new policy departures had become necessary to restore the "best men" to power in the South as well as the North.

Unable to prevent Grant's renomination in 1872, the dissidents held their own convention in Cincinnati in May, at which they nominated newspaperman Horace Greeley for president. They called themselves Liberal Republicans. Greeley's nomination resulted from behind-the-scenes maneuvering



Entitled "Clasp Hands over the Bloody Chasm," Thomas Nast's August 1872 cartoon denounces the Liberal Republican Party's presidential platform.

of the kind reformers condemned among Grant's supporters. And he was certainly an odd choice as the reformers' candidate for president. Greeley had a history of erratic judgment, such as when he supported peaceable secession in the winter of 1860–61, or tried to negotiate an end to the Civil War in 1864. Even though most Liberals favored free trade, Greeley had long supported the protective tariff, and he had never shown much interest in the reformers' pet scheme, civil-service reform. But as editor of the *New York Tribune* and a longtime foe of slavery and defender of blacks' rights, Greeley was widely respected throughout the North (even though, by 1870, he had declared that it was time to end Reconstruction: "the country is sick and tired of it," he claimed).

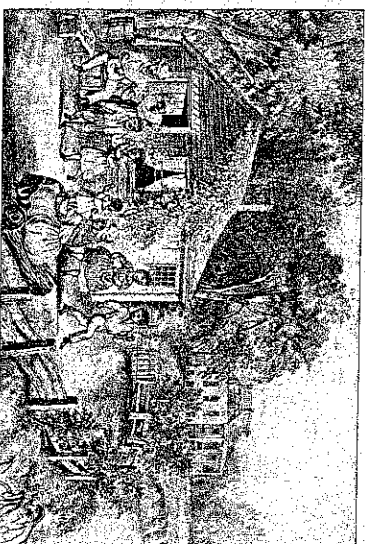
Realizing that the Republicans' split offered them a golden opportunity to repair their political fortunes, Democrats endorsed Greeley (a difficult decision, since he had spent much of his political career denouncing the Democratic Party). Many Democratic voters could not stomach their party's official candidate, who, at one time or another during his long career, had referred to Democrats as "murderers, adulterers, drunkards, cowards, liars, and thieves." Large numbers stayed at home, and Greeley went down to a devastating defeat. Grant carried every state north of the Mason-Dixon Line. But despite the debacle, the Greeley campaign placed on the northern agenda the one issue on which he, the reformers, and the Democrats could agree—a new policy toward the South. Opposition to Reconstruction had become linked to the crusade for political reform and good government. Greeley's campaign gave unprecedented national attention to complaints against Republicans' southern policy—that it brought corrupt government to the South and threatened to obliterate the traditional powers of the states—which within a few years would help to justify a broad northern retreat from the ideal of equality, and bring Reconstruction to an end.

VISUAL ESSAY

COUNTERSIGNS

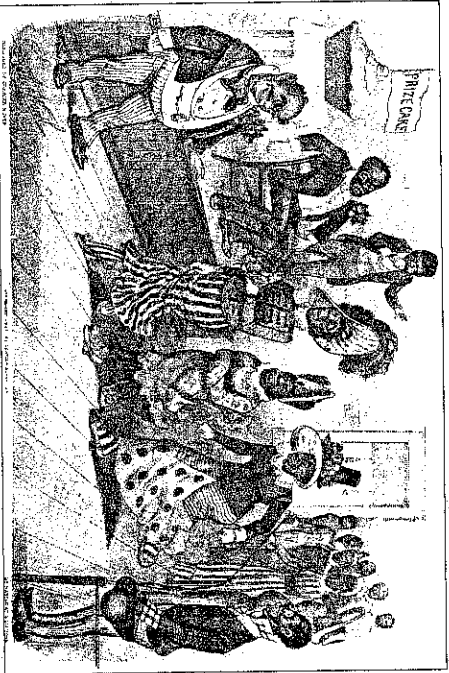
During the last three decades of the nineteenth century, the period known as the Gilded Age, one of the most popular ways to decorate the home was by purchasing lithographic prints. Before the perfection of photographic reproduction, these prints were an attractive, affordable, and relatively accurate means of duplicating and distributing works of fine art and photographs. They also offer a revealing lens on the nation's visual culture. Lithograph houses often commissioned original works for publication, and some artists gained reputations for subjects that addressed the many different markets that comprised the picture-hungry public. There were inoffensive still lifes and landscapes for the parlor, edifying historical tableaux and portraits of the illustrious for the children's room, and genre themes, sports prints, topical illustrations, and comic cartoons—the latter three most likely destined for the kitchen or for public, and often male-oriented, venues, such as barber shops and bars.

Curner and Ives was among the nation's most successful and prolific lithography houses and, amid its multitude of themes and subjects, views of the "new" South were favorites. But, as exemplified in the 1872 "The Old Plantation Home," it was often hard to discern at what point in history the South was being depicted. There was little in these bucolic visions of a lush and languid region to distinguish scenes set before from those done



after the war and the demise of slavery. Indeed, the goal may very well have been to exploit the nostalgia of white customers for a "simpler" time, before the trauma of civil war and the turmoil of Reconstruction. In these pictures, black people become stock figures in an attractive landscape. On those rare occasions, as in this print, when blacks were featured in such compositions, they frolicked—they certainly never worked—in modest but domestic surroundings, with the big house looming benevolently in the background.

It is unlikely that many black Americans were counted among the customers for these lithographic views. But we can say for certain that African Americans avoided the most popular of Currier and Ives's many pictorial products—Thomas Worth's *Darktown Comics*, a long-running series of inexpensive hand-colored prints, and a mainstay of Currier and Ives's business. In fact, *Darktown Comics* probably ensured the company's financial security throughout the 1880s and into the 1890s. Each installment of the series sold quickly in the tens of thousands, and the series' ubiquity and popularity situated African Americans in the unenviable position of the nation's buffoons. Usually published in pairs, the *Darktown Comics* invariably offered before-and-after sequences in which pompous, bumbling, and grotesque black figures tried to carry out the simplest task, everyday activity, or popular sport, with disastrous consequences.



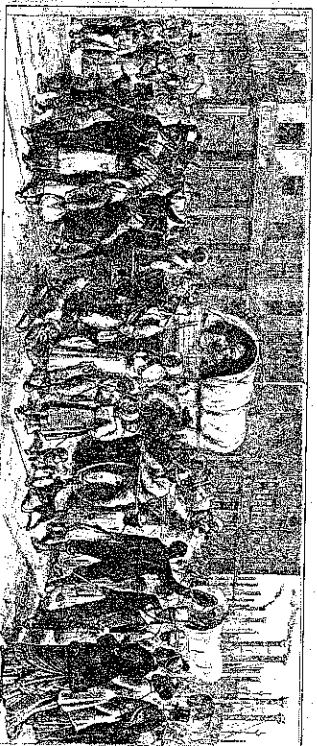
White viewers apparently found these prints highly amusing. The response of black Americans—and the casual racism of Gilded Age everyday life—is optimized in one incident recalled by cartoonist Thomas Worth late in his life. One afternoon, co-proprietor James Ives and Worth observed "a big crowd about the front window, looking and laughing at the [latest] 'Darktown' picture." Lapsing into the racist idiom of the day, Worth noted:

There was one well-dressed darky who took exception to the *Darktown* part of the show and he was expressing himself most forcibly. He said "he would like to just

once get hold of the fellow who drew dem 'scandalous' pictures of de poor colored man." The quick-witted Ives took in the situation. He said to the coon he would give him an introduction to the artist "who drew dem pictures,"—to wait a minute. He stepped back into the store and descended into the basement where the pictures were boxed to be sent away. The man who boxed the goods was a tremendous big Dutchman, a perfect Hercules. Ives explained the situation to him, and presented him to the complaining coon who took one look at him, sneaked off and vanished around the corner of Ann Street in a hurry, without getting hold of the man who "drew dem pictures."

In contrast to cartoons, pictorial journalism still occasionally broke from grotesque caricature to depict events involving African Americans. This visual reorientation was usually spurred by actions by black Americans that seemed to take the illustrated press by surprise, disrupting the general trend toward "normalizing" race relations through invidious racial comparisons.

For example, in April 1879, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* took note of the ongoing migration of tens of thousands of African Americans from the lower Mississippi Valley to Kansas. Editorials expressed surprise at the so-called Exodusters' numbers and their determination to leave the South. And, while deploring the ramifications of the migration on the southern economy, *Leslie's* acknowledged the migration as evidence of the injustice and intimidation accompanying renewed Democratic Party control in the region. Moreover, when *Leslie's* published engravings in its April 19, 1879, issue showing the arrival of black migrants in St. Louis, one panoramic illustration depicted an orderly procession of homesteaders



instead of the chaos of fleeing refugees described in many press reports. The modest dress and calm demeanor of the St. Louis Exoduster procession seems unremarkable at first glance, but it stood in sharp contrast to most contemporary news illustrations of southern African American life.

Just three weeks later, *Leslie's* showed "A family of Negroes who do not favor the exodus." "Here we have a portion of a well-to-do colored family in Virginia," the weekly commented, "whose thrift, or good luck, has enabled them to maintain themselves in comfort."

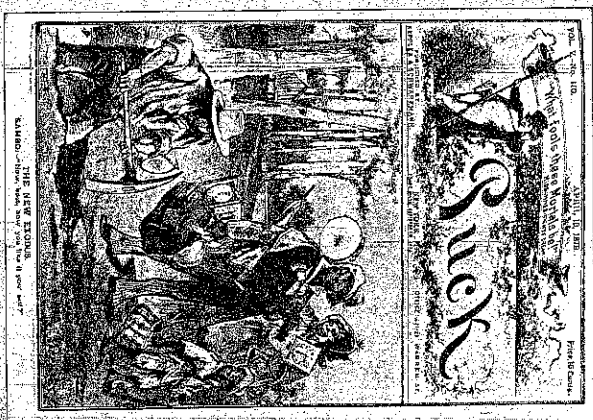
and who, in consequence, find no occasion in their surroundings for joining in the general exodus. Contentment beams from the old folks," *Leslie's* description continues, "and positive happiness from the son and heir. Perhaps, too, there is a shade of a feeling of superiority to the average run of the Virginia negroes, such as might be justly borne by a landed proprietor of the interior, and something also of the assumptions of aristocracy."



Unlike the Exodusters, the Virginia family in this picture exuded pomposity, the now standard depiction of the burlesqueness of southern blacks aspiring to rise above their appointed station. And, in this comparison, *Leslie's* also demarcated a new visual distinction between African Americans: the engraving of the migrants heralded the ambition and dignity of those who left versus the "characteristic" complacency of those who stayed behind.

The Exoduster phenomenon even affected the realm of the cartoon. The exaggerated physical traits—and some props—of racial caricature in depicting African Americans remained. But, as this cover of the weekly humor magazine *Puck* attests, the laugh was sometimes at the expense of the white Redemptionist South.

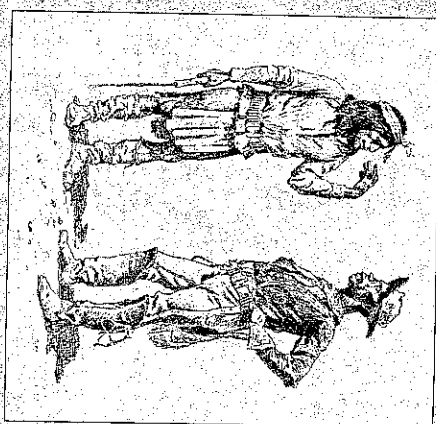
In the grand visual record of post-war national expansion, epitomized in the figures of stalwart pioneers, enterprising migrants, and rowdy cow-



boys, there was not much room for people of color. The pictorial paeans to and reporting on western settlement, railroad building, gold mining, and territorial warfare were often cruel to Native Americans, Mexicans, and Chinese immigrants—when these groups weren't completely cut out of the pictures. Similarly, African Americans who joined the trek westward were not standard subjects for pictorial journalists, cartoonists, painters, or photographers. But when black westerners did appear in pictures, their treatment was distinctive, harking back to the heroic imagery of the Civil War years.

Frederic Remington, the great chronicler and mythmaker of the late nineteenth-century conquest of the West, was a notorious bigot who detested Italians, Jews, and other recent immigrants, whom he viewed as a "malodorous crowd of foreign trash." Remington did, however, revere soldiers, especially the troops engaged in the containment of the Plains Indians. He traveled to the western territories in the 1880s to report on their exploits for *Harper's Weekly*, *The Century*, and other periodicals, and in the process ended up covering four black U.S. cavalry regiments, part of the "peace-time" army established by Congress in 1866.

"Sign Language" was one of a collection of Remington's drawings that accompanied an article by him in the April 1889 issue of *The Century*. The article portrayed the exploits of a scouting party of the Tenth U.S. Cavalry "buffalo soldiers" stationed in Arizona territory (the term *buffalo soldier* was supposedly coined by Indians who thought African Americans' hair resembled buffalo tails). Although the party was commanded by a white officer, Remington's eye was drawn to the black troops, and the resulting pictures, like all of his drawings of the buffalo soldiers, hailed their skill and courage without relying on the sort of gross racial stereotypes that dominated most imagery of southern blacks. Whatever Remington's racial

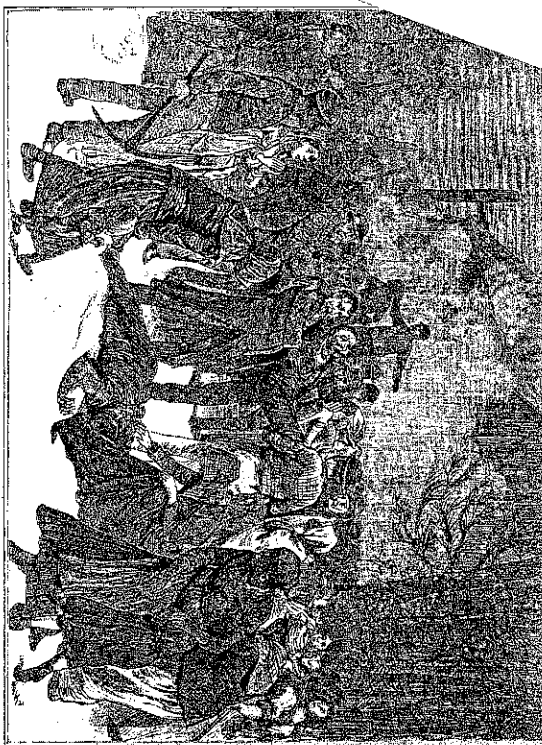


nation, it was fleeting: after his spate of buffalo soldier drawings in the 1880s, he never again chose African Americans as a subject.

If the 1880s marked any significant breakthrough in the visual documentation of the African American experience, it was in the engravings showing black participation in the nation's burgeoning labor movement. To be sure, some of those pictures portrayed blacks as strikebreakers, gaining momentary eligibility for certain jobs only when employers were battling trade unions (which too often barred blacks from membership). But, increasingly faced with limited prospects in agriculture, African Americans joined the nation's growing industrial labor force and, often in concert with their white working compatriots, sometimes met with disaster.

Disaster has always been fodder for pictorial journalism. It can also be a great leveler in even the most stratified of societies. In the expanding number of industrial accidents during the Gilded Age—which accompanied the heedless accumulation of capital at the expense of safety and accountability and affected primarily railroad and mine workers—African Americans achieved equality on the common ground of tragedy.

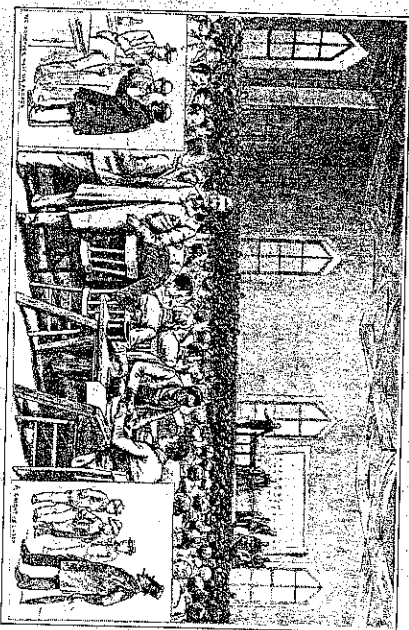
This shared misfortune found a visual equivalent as a February 1892 illustration in *Frank Leslie's* attested. Presenting a scene outside of the Midlothian coal mine in Chesterfield, shortly after an underground explosion, the illustration was distinctive in its of mutual catastrophe: black and white miners and their families intermingled in a shocked crowd gathered at the mine entrance.



There were other interracial visions of labor offered to the readers of the Gilded Age press. Four years later, in 1886, *Leslie's* covered the tenth annual meeting of the Knights of Labor, the era's largest labor organization, in Richmond, Virginia, with a front-page picture showing the African American New York City delegate Frank J. Ferrell introducing Grand Master Workman Terence Powderly to the organization's General Assembly. In the wake of racial tensions provoked by the New York contingent's insistence on equal access for its black delegate to Richmond's segregated services and institutions, *Frank Leslie's*, along with Powderly, took pains to assure agitated southern whites that the Order had "no purpose to interfere with or disrupt the social relations which may exist between the different races in the various parts of the country."

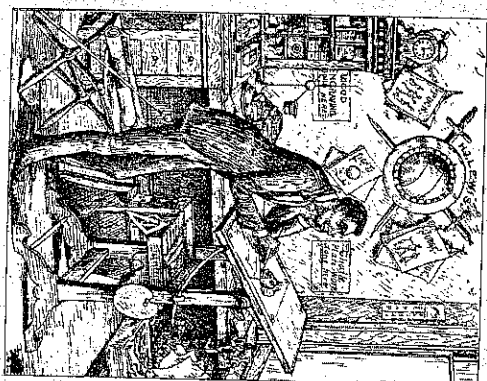
Leslie's October 16, 1886, engravings of the convention chose to mark the Knights

refusal to allow the imposition of the "color line" in its own proceedings and celebrated the convention's commitment to the principle of "civil and political equality of all men" that "in the broad field of labor recognizes no distinction on account of color." In both the Midlothian



These images were framed by stories that also testified to the costs attending black aspirations and the continuing obstacles to realizing those lofty goals.

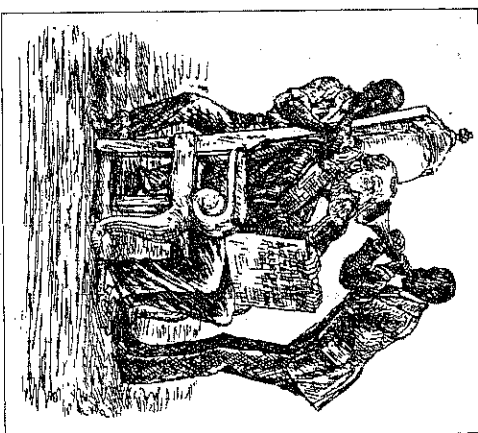
But these occasional offerings of respectful representation stoked frustration on the part of African American readers as much as they provided some respite from the overall flood of offensive and negative imagery. In the fifteen years following the Civil War, African Americans around the country founded some fifty newspapers and periodicals. None had the resources to compete with the lavishly illustrated weekly news magazines, but Indianapolis's *The Freeman*, founded in 1886, quickly gained a reputation as "A National Colored Newspaper"—or, as editor Edward E. Cooper preferred to characterize it, "The *Harper's Weekly* of the Colored Race."



The Freeman's circulation spread beyond Indianapolis to black communities all over the Midwest and South. Its popularity was in no small part a result of its weekly political cartoons, which captured many black Americans' sentiments about national politics and the "Negro Problem." The paper's first cartoonist was a former slave, a self-taught artist and engraver, and an occasional contributor to *Leslie's* and *Harper's Weekly*. Henry

Jackson Lewis, joining *The Freeman* in 1888, Lewis helped enliven the newspaper with portraits, journalistic illustrations, and especially pointed political cartoons critical of the new Republican president, Benjamin Harrison. But cartoons such as "The National Executive Asleep"—with black figures trying to awaken an

Harrison with bugles
"The Race Question" of local white resident (Harrison had Indiana senator prior to it), who may have put in the paper to squelch its editorial commentary.
stave the exact cause, work disappeared from the of *The Freeman* for the first of 1890. His cartoons returned



at that year, but the man who was the nation's first black political cartoonist died suddenly in April 1891. Lewis would therefore never witness the next betrayal that African Americans would confront in the following decade, codified into federal law and endorsed by the U.S. Supreme Court. As the United States turned its back on equality, a new pictorial order emerged to rationalize the nation's embrace of the malevolent doctrine of Jim Crow.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ABANDONMENT OF RECONSTRUCTION

IN SEPTEMBER 1877, a freedman named Henry Adams (who had been born a slave in Georgia in 1843) drafted a letter from Shreveport, Louisiana, to the American Colonization Society. Founded in 1816 with the aim of settling black Americans in Africa, the society had not, either in antebellum days or during the Civil War and Reconstruction, received much black support. Now, however, Adams reported that he had gathered the names of sixty thousand "hard laboring people," anxious to leave the South. "This is a horrible part of the country," he explained, "and our race can not get money for our labor. . . . It is impossible for us to live with these slaveholders of the South and enjoy the right as they enjoy it."

Adams had been brought to Louisiana by his owner from his birthplace in Georgia. At the end of the Civil War, his former master urged him to remain on the plantation and work for a share of the crop, but Adams decided to leave. "I said if I cannot do like a white man," he later recalled, "I am not free. I see how the poor white people do. I ought to do so too, or else I am a slave." After witnessing many acts of violence against freedpeople in the Shreveport area, and being assaulted by thieves himself, Adams in 1866 enlisted in the Union army, where he rose to the rank of quartermaster sergeant and learned to read and write. After his discharge, three years later, he worked as a plantation manager and became president of a Shreveport Republican club and, in 1876, deputy marshal of Bienville parish. Even before the end of Reconstruction, with violence pervasive in his part of Louisiana, Adams formed the Colonization Council, with the aim of obtaining for blacks "a territory to our selves," preferably in Africa, "where our forefathers came from."

No one knows if Adams managed to emigrate to Africa. He was last reported working in New Orleans in 1884 "for anybody I could get a job from." He then disappears from the historical record. No doubt, his report

of sixty thousand black Louisianians ready to leave for Africa was something of an exaggeration. But his letter illustrates how, by 1877, some African Americans despaired of ever achieving equality in the land of their birth.

Adams's letter came a few months after newly inaugurated Republican president Rutherford B. Hayes ordered federal troops to withdraw from positions at the statehouses of Louisiana and South Carolina, where they had been protecting Republican claimants to the governorships. This action (subsequently described by most historians, inaccurately, as the "withdrawal" of all federal troops from the South) marked the effective end of Reconstruction. It also represented a fundamental turning point in nineteenth-century American history, in effect announcing that the federal government would no longer interfere to protect either the political prospects of southern Republicans or the constitutional rights of black citizens. But Hayes's policy was not a sudden and unexpected repudiation of Reconstruction. Rather, it marked the culmination of a retreat that had gathered force since Ulysses S. Grant's reelection in 1873.

Many factors contributed to this development. In 1873, the United States, and indeed the entire Atlantic world, experienced a severe economic downturn. The failure of Jay Cooke and Company, one of the country's leading banking houses, triggered a financial panic that was soon followed by the worst depression in the country's history to that date. In the wake of factory closings, business bankruptcies, falling prices for agricultural products, and widespread unemployment (in some cities as high as 30 percent of the workforce), economic recovery replaced Reconstruction as the main focus of national and local political debates. In the North, major cities witnessed demonstrations demanding government relief for the unemployed. Farmers in western states demanded that the government regulate the conduct of railroads, whose high rates and monopolistic practices the farmers blamed for their economic plight. In the South, the price of cotton fell by half between 1873 and 1877, plunging many merchants and planters into bankruptcy, forcing indebted small white farmers to forfeit their land and become sharecroppers, and undermining progress blacks had made toward landownership. The depression destroyed whatever hope still existed that Reconstruction would usher in a modernized New South.

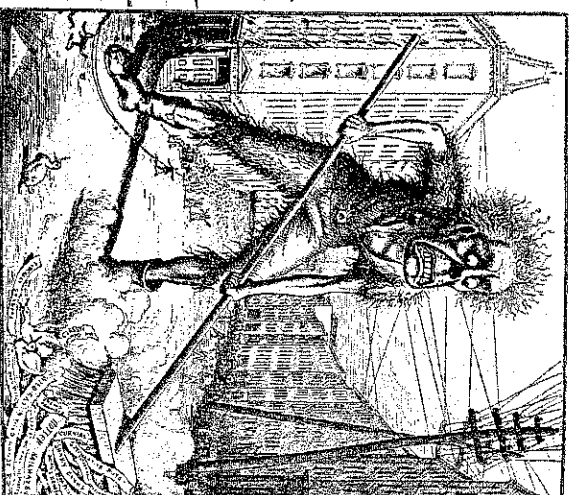
The economic disaster revitalized the Democratic Party. In 1874, for the first time since the Civil War, Democrats won control of the House of Representatives. Shortly before the new Congress met, Republicans enacted the last of the major Reconstruction measures—the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited racial discrimination in transportation and public accommodation. Its author, the Radical Republican senator Charles

Sumner, had repeatedly introduced the bill without success since the late 1860s; it passed, in part, as a tribute to Sumner, who had died in 1874. But the Democratic election victory meant that Congress, divided between the two parties, was essentially paralyzed. No further Reconstruction legislation or other initiatives to protect the rights of the former slaves would be forthcoming.

Growing labor unrest made many white northerners more sympathetic to white southern complaints about Reconstruction. Racial and class prejudices re-

inforced one another, as increasing numbers of middle-class northerners identified what they considered the illegitimate demands of workers and farmers in their own society with the alleged misconduct of the former slaves in the South. Liberal Republican journals found a wider and wider audience for their call for a return to rule by the "best men" throughout the country. They placed the blame for Reconstruction's problems squarely on the alleged inferiority and incapacity of the South's black voters.

In 1873, *New York Tribune* editor Whitelaw Reid sent James S. Pike to South Carolina to report on conditions in the state. A Liberal Republican, Pike intended his reports to further discredit the Grant administration and to punish black voters for favoring Grant over Greeley in the previous fall's election. Pike's reports, gathered in a widely read book, *The Prostrate State*, had a powerful impact on the image of the former slaves in the North. His portrait of South Carolina was suffused with racial and class prejudice: the state, wrote Pike, "lies prostrate in the dust. . . . It is the spectacle of a society turned upside down. . . . It is the dregs of the popula-



A September 1873 cartoon, "Panic, as a Health Officer, Sweeping the Garbage out of Wall Street," offered a glibly vision to readers of the *New York Daily Graphic* while suggesting that financial disasters cleansed the economy.

tion [dressed] in the robes of their intelligent predecessors, and asserting over them the rule of ignorance and corruption, through the inexorable machinery of a majority of numbers. It is barbarism overwhelming civilization by physical force." South Carolina's freedpeople, he added, possessed an "average of intelligence but slightly above the level of animals." Pike pointedly compared the former slaves, who allegedly refused to labor efficiently for whites and still covered land of their own, with disaffected northern workers, who conducted strikes and called on state governments to provide jobs for the unemployed. In both cases, the lower orders sought to elevate their positions in society by interfering with the rights of property owners, rather than through thrift and hard work. Pike's book helped make South Carolina a national byword for political corruption and reinforced the idea that the cause lay in "negro government."

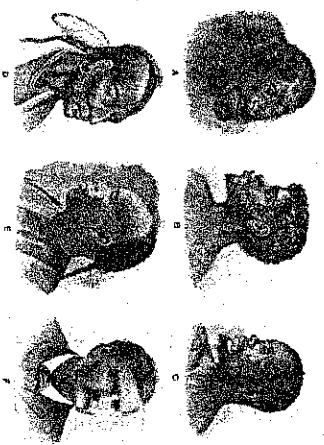
A "counter-revolution" was now overtaking Reconstruction, lamented Vice President Henry Wilson, a veteran Radical Republican. "Men are beginning to hint at changing the condition of the Negro." Racism, of course, had never been eliminated from northern life. As noted earlier, despite Reconstruction, the vast majority of African Americans remained trapped in poverty, confined to menial and unskilled jobs. Nonetheless, as a result of Reconstruction, the North's public life had been opened to blacks in ways inconceivable before the Civil War. In the 1860s, the Republican Party had not only given northern blacks the right to vote, but also sought to ensure their access to public schools, and in many places worked against discriminatory practices on streetcars and railroads, and in private businesses. In the economic crisis of the 1870s, however, as the nation looked for scapegoats, racism increasingly reasserted its hold on northern thought and behavior. Engravings in popular journals depicted the freedpeople not as upstanding citizens harassed by violent opponents (as had been the case immediately after the Civil War) but as little more than unbridled animals. (See "Countersigns" visual essay.) By the mid-1870s, it was quite common in the North to write, in the words of the contemporary historian Francis Parkman, of "the monstrosities of Negro rule in South Carolina." Racism in other words, offered a convenient explanation for the alleged "failure" of Reconstruction.

The idea of the natural superiority of some races to others, which before the Civil War had been invoked to justify slavery in an otherwise free society, now reemerged, cloaked in the vocabulary of modern science. The growing use of language borrowed from Charles Darwin's evolutionary theory, such as "natural selection," "the struggle for existence," and "the survival of the fittest," became part and parcel of social discourse in the North. What came to be called Social Darwinism condemned all forms

THE WORLD'S PEOPLES.

INTRODUCTION.

The object of these pages is to furnish a brief yet comprehensive view of the nations of the world, their origin and growth, their leading characteristics, and their present position. It is not intended to be a mere list of names, but a guide to the knowledge of the world, and a source of information for the student and the traveler. It is designed to improve upon the general knowledge of the world, and to furnish a basis for the study of the world's peoples.



1. The American Indian, 2. The African, 3. The Asiatic, 4. The European, 5. The Australian, 6. The Native American. These portraits illustrate the diversity of the world's peoples and their physical characteristics. The text continues to discuss the origin and growth of these peoples, their leading characteristics, and their present position. It is not intended to be a mere list of names, but a guide to the knowledge of the world, and a source of information for the student and the traveler. It is designed to improve upon the general knowledge of the world, and to furnish a basis for the study of the world's peoples.

An illustration in a popular late-nineteenth-century world atlas offers an ascending hierarchy of the human race, beginning with an orangutan.

of state interference with the "natural" workings of society, especially misguided efforts to uplift those at the bottom of the social order. By and large, in this view, the poor were responsible for their own conditions, and African Americans were consigned by nature itself to occupy the lowest rungs of the social ladder. Whether in the form of labor legislation or Radical Reconstruction, governmental efforts to alter the natural workings of society only impeded social progress.

If any one episode symbolized the accelerating retreat from Reconstruction, it was the collapse in 1874 of the Freedman's Savings Bank, one of the many financial institutions to succumb during the depression. Chartered by Congress in 1865 to encourage thrift among the former slaves, the bank was a private corporation, but it often shared offices with the Freedmen's Bureau and employed federal army officers to persuade freedpeople to open accounts. By 1874, when the bank collapsed, sixty-one thousand African Americans had done just that. Although President Grant called on Congress to reimburse the depositors, Congress did nothing; in the end, half the depositors received compensation for a fraction of their losses when the bank's assets were liquidated, and half received nothing at all. The biggest loser was Frederick Douglass, who had been appointed the

bank's president in 1874 to shore up public confidence in the bank just before its collapse. Douglass deposited ten thousand dollars, which he never saw again. In the same year, the *New National Era*, a weekly newspaper that Douglass edited in Washington during Reconstruction, also fell victim to the depression.

The Supreme Court, it is often said, follows the election returns. And as support for Reconstruction waned in the North, the court began to emasculate the legislation and constitutional amendments of the 1860s. The first pivotal decision, in the "Slaughterhouse Cases," was announced in 1873. Allegedly to preserve the public health, Louisiana had created a corporation to monopolize the slaughter of animals in New Orleans, effectively making it impossible for many butchers to practice their traditional craft. White butchers who faced the loss of their livelihoods sued, on the grounds that their rights as American citizens under the Fourteenth Amendment had been violated. The "equal protection of the law" guaranteed by the amendment, their lawyers insisted, included "the right of free labor"—that is, the ability to follow any lawful trade without governmental interference. The court rejected their argument. Speaking for a 5-4 majority, Justice Samuel F. Miller ruled that the Fourteenth Amendment applied only to the former slaves, and that the rights it protected were only those that owed their existence to the federal government, not to the states. Miller mentioned that these federal rights included access to ports and waterways, the ability to travel abroad, and the right to run for federal office. Few of these were of pressing concern to the majority of black Americans. Otherwise, the decision continued, citizens' rights originated where they always had, with the states. Thus, in the guise of affirming the freedmen's status as national citizens, the Slaughterhouse Cases severely limited the rights for which they could claim federal protection.

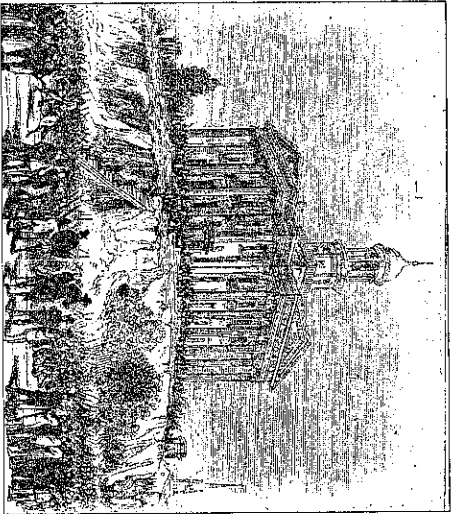
Three years later came *United States v. Cruikshank*, a case that arose from the Colfax, Louisiana, massacre of 1873, discussed earlier. Here, the court not only overturned the three convictions that federal prosecutors had managed to obtain against the white perpetrators, but it went on to state that the postwar amendments empowered Washington to act only against violations of citizens' rights by the states, not by individuals—a repudiation of the expansion of federal criminal jurisdiction embodied in the Enforcement Acts. The decision made national prosecution of crimes committed against blacks almost impossible.

By the time *Cruikshank* was decided, in 1876, terrorism had again reared its head in the South. With northern commitment to Reconstruction waning and African American assertiveness rising—as evidenced by the growing number of state and local black officeholders in the Deep South—

Democrats had both the opportunity and an increased motive to move aggressively against Republican rule. Democrats in 1873 regained control of Texas, a state with a large white majority, where the party could win by mobilizing white voters, without resorting to violence. Elsewhere in the Gulf states, however, blacks represented 45 percent of the population or more, and Republicans usually would be favored in a fair and peaceful election. Thus, Democrats turned to illegal methods. In 1874, the White League was formed in Louisiana with the avowed purpose of restoring white supremacy, by violent means if necessary. On September 14, some 3,500 leagueurs seized control of city hall and the statehouse in New Orleans; they withdrew only when federal troops arrived. Republicans managed to carry Louisiana in the fall elections, but were not so fortunate in Alabama, where armed bands prevented many blacks from casting ballots on election day. There, thanks to a significant falloff in Republican votes in the plantation belt, where most blacks lived, Democrats won control of the governorship and legislature.

If the dispatch of troops after the New Orleans uprising indicated that President Grant was not willing to countenance the overt overthrow of a Reconstruction government, events in Alabama suggested that he would not intervene against violence during electoral campaigns. This became abundantly clear in 1875, when, thanks to a carefully orchestrated campaign of violence, Democrats overturned the Reconstruction government of Mississippi. They mobilized nearly the entire white population of the state with appeals to white supremacy and protecting the sanctity of the white family, allegedly threatened by a recent state law banning discrimination by railroads, hotels, and places of public entertainment. (This, Democrats insisted, would result in "unnatural association" between the races and, eventually, integrated schools and interracial marriage.) But talk alone did not carry the state. As the fall legislative elections approached, armed Democratic bands terrorized black communities throughout Mississippi. In Yazoo County, several prominent black leaders were murdered, and the sheriff, Albert T. Morgan, a white Ohioan who had moved to the area after the war (and compounded his offense by marrying a black woman), was driven from the region. Democrats attacked a Republican barbecue at Clinton, and went on to murder some thirty blacks, among them schoolteachers, ministers, and local Republican organizers. In Copiah County, the sheriff reported, whites "formed themselves into military organizations . . . armed themselves with army guns and bayonets and cannon," and prevented blacks from assembling or campaigning.

Besieged by requests for protection, Republican governor Adelbert



A December 1874 illustration in Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper provides a distant and bloodless perspective on the Vicksburg, Mississippi, White League's efforts violently to unseat African American sheriff Peter Crosby. After defeating the sheriff's supporters, armed white bands terrorized the countryside, murdering hundreds of black citizens.

Klan's depredations a few years earlier, violent bands in 1875 operated without disguise, as if to flaunt their lack of fear of legal reprisal. On election eve, armed riders warned freedmen they would be killed if they attempted to vote. The following day, whites equipped with a cannon and rifles drove black voters from the polls at Aberdeen; elsewhere, they stuffed or destroyed the ballot boxes. "The reports which come to me almost hourly are truly sickening," wrote Ames. "The government of the U.S. does not interfere."

Braving the campaign of intimidation, blacks turned out to vote in most parts of Mississippi. Where the violence was most intense, however, the Republican vote declined precipitously. In Yazoo, only seven ballots were counted for the party. In the end, Democrats swept control of the legislature, and then forced Ames to resign under threat of impeachment. "A revolution has taken place," Ames wrote, "by force of arms, and a race are disfranchised. They are to be returned to a condition of serfdom, an era of second slavery."

Victory did not stoke the thirst for violence. On Christmas Day, a white friend invited freedman Charles Caldwell to share a drink at a store in Clinton. A blacksmith who had represented Hinds County in the constitutional

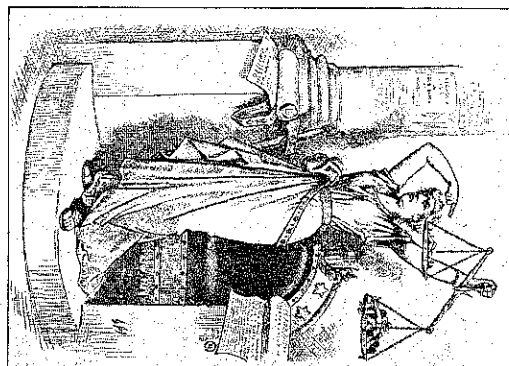
Ames asked the president to dispatch federal troops. But Grant refused, and northern newspapers drew attention to one sentence in his reply: "The whole public are tired out with these annual autumnal outbreaks in the South." [and] are ready now to condemn any interference—on the part of the government." Given this license by the president to intimidate, Democrats intensified their campaign. Moreover, unlike the

convention of 1868 and the state Senate, Caldwell chaired the local Republican executive committee. "He was as brave a man as I ever knew," commented a white Republican associate. But on that day, armed men lay in hiding, and as Caldwell raised his glass, they shot him in the back.

At the 1876 national Republican convention, Frederick Douglass, who had labored tirelessly for the party during Reconstruction, pointedly asked, "Do you mean to make good to us the promises in your constitution?" By this time, most Republican leaders had concluded that the northern white public would no longer support intervention in the South on behalf of the former slaves. Their presidential candidate, Governor Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio, pledged in his letter accepting the nomination to bring the South "the blessings of honest and capable local self government"—code words for an end to Reconstruction. The Democrats nominated Samuel J. Tilden, the governor of New York. It was quite clear that, whenever emerged victorious, Reconstruction was doomed.

In the South, Democrats redoubled their efforts to take control of states that still had Reconstruction governments. Their most strenuous effort took place in South Carolina, where they nominated former Confederate general Wade Hampton as their candidate for governor. While Hampton pledged to respect the equal rights of the state's African Americans, many of his supporters, inspired by the example of Mississippi, turned to violence to neutralize the considerable black voting majority. At Hamburg, South Carolina, where Prince Rivers, once a sergeant in Thomas Wentworth Higginson's black Civil War regiment, served as trial justice, an altercation on July 4, 1876, escalated into a battle between the black militia and armed whites under the command of former Confederate general Matthew C. Butler. In the end, the outnumbered militiamen surrendered, whereupon five were murdered in cold blood. The Hamburg Massacre demoralized many Republicans, but it spurred others to emulate their opponents. The 1876 campaign became one of the few times during Reconstruction when violence originated on both sides. Six white men were killed at Cainho, near Charleston, when armed blacks opened fire on a political meeting. But the campaign of intimidation launched by General Hampton's "Red Shirts" dwarfed such events. "Every Democrat must feel honor bound to control the vote of at least one Negro, by intimidation, purchase, keeping him away [from the polls] or as each individual may determine," declared the "Plan of campaign" circulated by Democratic leader Martin W. Gary. A reign of terror reminiscent of the Ku Klux Klan days spread over upcountry counties, and the election, one Democratic observer admitted, was "one of the grandest farces ever seen."

On a suspenseful election night, it became clear that the result of the



In a parody of the meaning of equality, Harper's Weekly cartoonist Thomas Nast depicts Justice demanding white deaths to match the black victims of the July 1876 Hamburg, South Carolina, massacre.

southern affairs. He also pledged to place a southerner in the cabinet and to work for federal aid to the Texas and Pacific Railroad, a transcontinental line projected to follow a southern route. For their part, Democrats promised not to dispute Hayes's election and to respect the civil and political rights of blacks. Thus was concluded the Bargain or Compromise of 1877. Some of its promises were fulfilled—Hayes became president; Democrats took control of Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina; and David M. Key of Tennessee was appointed postmaster general. Some were violated—the Texas and Pacific never got its land grant, and, most ominously, the triumphant southern Democrats would never truly recognize blacks as equal citizens.

Within two months of taking office, Hayes ordered federal troops to stop guarding the statehouses in Louisiana and South Carolina, thus allowing Democratic claimants to seize the two remaining Republican governorships. (Florida's Supreme Court had earlier declared a Democrat the victor in the 1876 gubernatorial election, although it also held that Hayes had carried the state.) "The whole South—every State in the South," commented

presidential contest hinged on the returns from Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina, which both parties claimed to have carried. After much confusion, Congress appointed an electoral commission, composed of five representatives, five senators, and five members of the Supreme Court to adjudicate the disputed returns. By a series of 8–7 votes, strictly following party lines, the commission awarded the three contested states to the Republican, Hayes, certifying him as victor by a single electoral vote.

Even as the commission deliberated, however, behind-the-scenes negotiations were under way between national leaders of the two parties. Hayes's representatives agreed that if he became president, he would recognize Democratic control of the entire South and refrain from further intervention in

one former slave "had got into the hands of the very men who held us as slaves." "The long controversy over the black man," announced the *Chicago Tribune*, "seems to have reached a finality."

As a historical process—the nation's adjustment to the destruction of slavery—Reconstruction continued well after 1877. But as a distinct era of national history, when Republicans controlled much or all of the South, blacks exercised significant political power, and the federal government accepted the responsibility for protecting the fundamental rights of all American citizens, Reconstruction had come to an end.

The former slaves re-acted in numerous ways to this turn of events. Emigration movements such as the one organized by Henry Adams in Louisiana were one expression of a widespread sense of aborted hopes and constricted opportunities. Local organizations devoted to emigration sprang up throughout the South, like the Liberia Exodus Association of Pinesville, Florida, and the Pilgrimage Travelers of Robertson County, Texas. Hundreds of letters from blacks anxious to leave the country poured into the offices of the American Colonization Society. "The colored man has no home in America," declared Harrison N. Bouey, a teacher and Baptist minister who organized an emigration movement in South Carolina in 1877. "We have no chance to rise from beggars. Men own the capital that we work, who believe that they still have a right to either us or our value from the general government." Bouey sailed for Liberia on the *Acow* in 1878, along with two hundred black Carolinians.



Republican president Rutherford B. Hayes is portrayed in this cartoon from the satirical weekly Puck as the "Modern St. George," freeing the South from the "monster" of Reconstruction.

Change after the election of 1876 was immediate in labor relations as well. What one black political leader called "the class legislation of the Democrats against the race" included vagrancy laws, restrictions on "enticing" a worker to leave his employment for another job, and criminal penalties for breach of contract. Measures reminiscent of the Black Codes of 1865-66 authorized the arrest of virtually any person without employment. Unlike the laws of Presidential Reconstruction, the new ones ostensibly applied to members of both races, otherwise they would have violated the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the Fourteenth Amendment. But they were enforced in a blatantly discriminatory manner. "A single instance of punishment of whites under these acts has never occurred," a Tennessee black convention declared.

Meanwhile, southern legislatures greatly increased the penalties for petty crimes, a strategy targeted especially against blacks. Mississippi's famous "pig law" defined the theft of any cattle or swine as grand larceny punishable by five years in prison. "They send [a man] to the penitentiary if he steals a chicken," complained a former slave in North Carolina. As the South's prison population rose, the leasing of convicts became a lucrative business. Railroads, mining companies, and other businesses vied for this new form of involuntary labor, the vast majority of them blacks imprisoned for minor offenses. Conditions in labor camps were often barbaric, with disease rife and the death rate high. "One dies, get another" was the motto of the system's architects, since thanks to discriminatory law enforcement by all-white police forces and the exclusion of blacks from juries, there seemed to be an endless supply of black convicts to replace those who perished.

The Radicals' failure to achieve land reform had ensured that most black southerners would be confined to agricultural labor on white-owned land. Of menial jobs in southern cities, sharecroppers frequently found themselves in debt at the end of a crop year. "We make as much cotton and sugar as we did when we were slaves," noted a Texas sharecropper, "and it does us as little good now as it did then." New laws passed by the Redeemers added to the tenants' problems. During Reconstruction, many states had awarded tenants the first lien on a crop, with preference over merchants or others to whom landowners owed money. Now, courts ruled that the tenant was, legally speaking, nothing more than a wage laborer, with no claim to compensation until the planter's other obligations had been discharged. North Carolina placed the entire crop in the hands of the landlord until rent was fully paid, and allowed no challenge to his decision as to when the tenant's obligations had been fulfilled. Throughout the South, if the planter was heavily in debt to a merchant, the sharecropper

might end up with nothing. Finally, with Redemption, the balance of power at the local level shifted in the planters' favor in terms of the use of governmental force. This was clearly demonstrated in November 1887, when field laborers in the Louisiana sugar district organized a strike for higher wages. Planters called in the militia to force the strikers back to work, and the troops stood by as local possses massacred more than fifty workers, effectively ending the walkout.

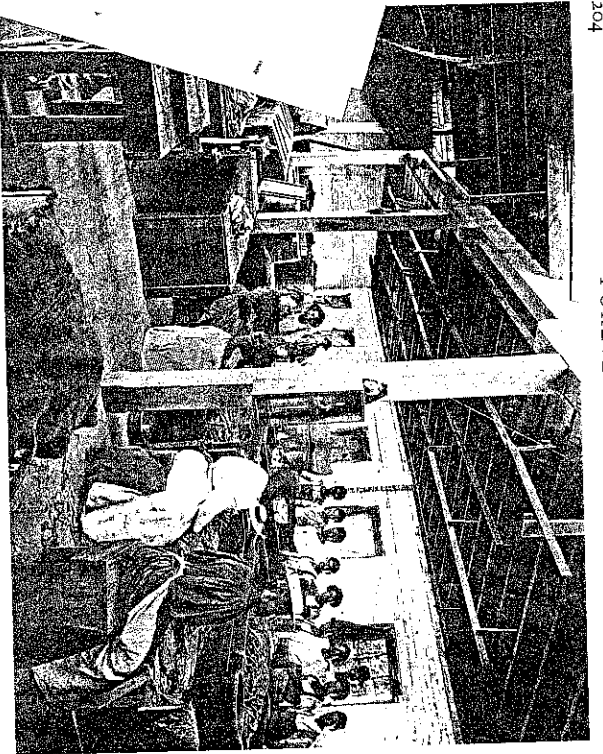
Under the Redeemers, the rural South sank even further into poverty, a trend that would continue into the twentieth century, so that by the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt would declare the region the nation's "number one" economic problem. As the most disadvantaged rural southerners, black farmers in the post-Reconstruction decades suffered the most from the region's overall condition.

In southern cities, the situation for the descendants of slaves was more complex. The network of institutions whose foundations had been laid during Reconstruction—schools and colleges, churches, businesses, fraternal orders, women's clubs, and the like—served as the infrastructure for thriving and increasingly diverse black urban communities. These institutions also formed the basis for the rapid growth of the black middle class, mostly professionals such as teachers and physicians, or businessmen serving the needs of a black clientele. Even in cities, however, most blacks were relegated to menial and unskilled employment. Most urban black males worked as manual laborers or as personal servants in white homes. The large majority of employed black women labored as laundresses and domestic workers. A rigidly segmented job market kept blacks excluded from nearly all skilled employment. Black men had little access to supervisory positions in factories and workshops or to the burgeoning white-collar workforce of clerks in offices. Black women could not find employment as secretaries, typists, or department store clerks.

Most labor unions, north and south, barred blacks from membership. The few exceptions, such as the Knights of Labor, which flourished in the 1880s, attracted a large membership of blacks eager to find allies in the struggle for economic empowerment and respect in the workplace. Although most of their local assemblies were segregated, the Knights welcomed blacks as members. Their demise in the 1890s left some local unions of longshoremen and mine workers with significant numbers of both black and white members. But in most occupations, the few unions that existed in the South formed yet another barrier to blacks' economic advancement.

Overall, one historian has written, the New South was "a miserable landscape dotted only by a few rich enclaves that cast little or no light upon the poverty surrounding them." Trapped at the bottom of a stagnant econ-

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African American workers prepare tobacco in Richmond, Virginia, stripping stems from the leaves.

omy, excluded from jobs in the textile factories that burgeoned in the southern piedmont, and denied access to industrial employment in the North, blacks had few chances to improve their situation in life or to fulfill the long-standing desire for land of their own. In the Upper South, economic development offered some opportunities—mines, iron furnaces, and tobacco factories employed black laborers, and because a shift from tobacco to truck farming encouraged planters to sell off some of their holdings, a good number of blacks managed to acquire land, albeit usually small plots of marginal fertility. In the Deep South, however, African Americans owned a smaller percentage of the land in 1900 than they had at the end of Reconstruction.

Neither black voting nor officeholding came to an abrupt end in 1877. In many states, blacks continued to cast ballots in large numbers, although in some states Redeemers solidified their control of state and local affairs by redrawing district lines and substituting appointive for elective officials in counties with black majorities. In cities such as Mobile, Alabama, blacks continued to serve on juries after 1877. Small numbers of blacks continued to win election to southern legislatures, and a few, representing heavily black districts, even served in Congress in the 1880s and 1890s. Thanks to

Republican control of the White House for most of the years from 1876 to 1912, many African Americans held patronage posts distributed by federal officials in Washington. Joseph H. Lee, a graduate of Howard University Law School who moved to Florida in 1873 and was elected to seven terms in the state legislature, served as customs collector at Jacksonville from 1880 to 1913. Robert Smalls, the daring slave pilot who brought his vessel over to the Union navy during the Civil War, held a string of offices during and after Reconstruction. He was elected to five terms in the House of Representatives, and represented Beaufort County in the South Carolina Constitutional Convention of 1895, where he spoke out eloquently against the movement to disenfranchise black voters.

Black political leaders operated in a profoundly altered context after the end of Reconstruction. Local officials confronted hostile state governments and national administrations indifferent to their constituents' concerns, and black lawmakers found it difficult to exert influence as a tiny minority in Democratic-dominated legislatures. Most black officials now depended for their power on the goodwill of prominent Democrats, or patronage dispensed by the federal government, rather than on the backing of a politically mobilized black community. For men of talent and ambition, avenues other than

politics—business, the law, the church—increasingly seemed to offer greater opportunities for personal advancement and community service than did politics. One interesting result was that by the 1890s, black women activists, including antilynching crusader Ida B. Wells and temperance and women's suffrage activist Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, seemed to have taken up the banner of political leadership abandoned by so many black men. The National Association of Colored Women, founded in 1896, brought together local and regional women's clubs to press for both women's rights and racial uplift. Most female activists emerged from the small urban, black middle class and



Antilynching crusader Ida B. Wells and the widow and orphans of a black businessman murdered in Memphis in 1892

preached the necessity of "respectable" behavior and demeanor as essential to the struggle for equal rights. By claiming the mantle of respectability for black women, they implicitly challenged dominant racial ideologies, which consigned all blacks to the status of degraded second-class citizens.

In a few areas, enclaves of genuine black political power survived the end of Reconstruction—including Robert Smalls's bailiwick in the South Carolina low country, the "black second" congressional district of Virginia, and Galveston, Texas, where former slave Norris W. Cuney headed a political machine that made him the state's most powerful black politician. In several states, the victorious Democrats fractured, with Independent movements challenging tax and spending policies that favored urban and rural elites at the expense of small farmers. These divisions created new political opportunities for black voters. In Mobile, for example, black voters helped one Democratic faction with local elections in 1883, and were rewarded with the appointment of more black teachers in segregated schools. In Virginia and North Carolina, blacks took part in interracial coalitions that briefly took control of state government and instituted policies—including expanded education and more equitable law enforcement—reminiscent of Reconstruction. In Virginia, the Readjuster movement (so named because it called for reducing payment of the state debt, which was starving schools and other public responsibilities) brought together Republicans and dissident Democrats and ousted the Redeemers from power in 1879. In North Carolina, a coalition of black Republicans and white Populists took over the state government between 1894 and 1898. In other states as well, the People's Party, or Populists—composed mainly of white farmers who believed the Democrats indifferent to their economic plight—sought to attract black votes. By and large, their challenge to the Redeemers' political order failed. But as long as black suffrage survived, so too did the possibility of significant political change within the South.

For nearly a generation after the end of Reconstruction, despite fraud, violence, and redistricting, most black southerners continued to cast ballots. Beginning in 1890, however, every southern state enacted laws or constitutional provisions designed to eliminate the black vote entirely. Since the Fifteenth Amendment prohibited the use of race as a qualification for suffrage, these new measures were ostensibly color-blind. The most popular devices included poll taxes, without payment of which a voter lost the franchise; literacy tests and requirements that a prospective voter demonstrate an "understanding" of the state constitution; and stringent residency requirements. Some white leaders presented disenfranchisement as a "good government measure"—a means of ending the fraud, violence, and stuffing of ballot boxes used against Republicans since 1877. But whatever the

motivation, the aim, as a Charleston, South Carolina, newspaper declared, was to "reduce the colored vote to insignificance in every county in the State," and to make clear that the white South "does not desire or intend ever to include black men among its citizens."

The result was the virtual elimination of black voting in the South. And although sympathetic election officials often allowed whites who did not meet the new qualifications to register, the number of eligible white voters declined as well. Louisiana, for example, reduced the number of black voters from one hundred thirty thousand to one thousand. But eighty thousand white voters also lost the franchise. In 1898, the Supreme Court encouraged the disenfranchisement movement by ruling, in *Williams v. Mississippi*, that the suffrage provisions of the state's 1890 constitution did not violate the Fifteenth Amendment, since they did not "on their face discriminate between the races."

The elimination of almost all black and many white voters not only reversed the long nineteenth-century trend toward universal suffrage, but also transformed much of the South into a series of rotten boroughs, whose representatives in Congress would long wield far greater power on the national scene than their tiny electorates warranted. The Fourteenth Amendment provided that if any state deprived a group of male citizens of the franchise, it would lose part of its representation in Congress. But like much of the federal Constitution, this provision became a dead letter so far as African Americans were concerned.

Along with disenfranchisement, the 1890s saw the widespread imposition of racial segregation in the South. Of course, de facto racial separation had existed in Reconstruction schools and many other institutions, and among the first acts of the Redeemers had been to institutionalize in the law the principle of separate schools for white and black students. But it was not until the 1890s that the Supreme Court, in the landmark decision *Plessy v. Ferguson*, gave its approval to state laws requiring separate facilities for blacks and whites. The case arose in Louisiana, where the legislature had enacted a law requiring railroad companies to maintain a separate car for black passengers. Homer Plessy, a local shoemaker and an official of the New Amis Sincere, an organization formed in 1887 to promote public education in New Orleans, challenged his exclusion from a whites-only first-class car. Several former black Reconstruction officials organized the Citizens' Committee, which filed a court challenge. The issue was not simply comfort while traveling, but the implications for the idea of equal citizenship of "caste legislation" of any sort. To argue the case before the Supreme Court, the committee hired Abijon W. Toussé, a native of Ohio who as a judge during Reconstruction had waged a courageous battle

against the Ku Klux Klan. "Citizenship is national and knows no color," Touggé asserted. The state's requirement that blacks be segregated from whites violated the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of equal protection before the law. But in an 8-1 decision, the Court upheld the law, arguing that separate facilities were not discriminatory so long as they were separate but equal. The lone dissenter, John Marshall Harlan, hurled at the majority the oft-quoted dictum: "Our Constitution is color-blind."

More than simply an interpretation of the equal protection clause, Harlan's dissent was a rumination on the meaning of freedom and citizenship in a racialized democracy. Segregation, he insisted, sprang from whites' conviction that they were the "dominant race" (a phrase employed by the Court's majority), and this violated the principle of equal liberty spawned by the Civil War and institutionalized during Reconstruction.

As Harlan predicted, the *Plessy* decision was quickly followed by state laws mandating racial segregation in every aspect of life, from schools to hospitals, waiting rooms to toilets, drinking fountains to cemeteries. In some states, taxi drivers were forbidden by law to carry members of different races at the same time. But more than simply a form of racial separation, segregation was part of a complex system of white domination, in which each component—disenfranchisement, unequal economic status, inferior education—reinforced the others. The system's major premise, as Dunbar Rowland, a Mississippi historian, explained in 1903, was that no black person would ever



John Marshall Harlan

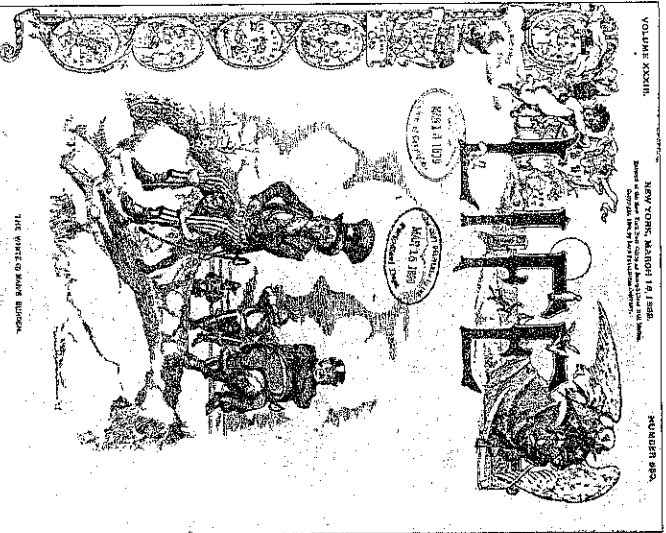
"be accepted as an equal no matter how great his future advancement." The point was not so much to keep the races apart as to ensure that when they came into contact with each other, whether in politics, labor relations, or social life, whites held the upper hand. Jim Crow, a term that originated as the name of a stock character in nineteenth-century minstrel shows, became a popular shorthand for racial segregation, and more generally for the South's all-encompassing system of racial inequality.

Those blacks who sought to challenge the system, or who refused to accept docilely the insults and demands for demeaning behavior that were a daily feature of life, faced not only overwhelming political and legal power, but also the very real threat of violent reprisal. Between 1880 and 1968, nearly 3,500 persons were lynched in the United States; the vast majority of them black men in the South. Some lynchings occurred secretly at night; others were advertised in advance and attracted huge audiences of onlookers. In 1899, Sam Hose, a plantation laborer who killed his employer in self-defense, was brutally murdered near Newnan, Georgia, before two thousand onlookers, some of whom arrived on a special excursion train from Atlanta. The crowd watched as Hose's executioners cut off his ears, fingers, and genitals and burned him alive, and then fought over "souvenirs," such as pieces of his bones. Law enforcement authorities made no effort to prevent the lynching or to bring the assailants to justice. Like many victims of lynchings, Hose was retrospectively accused of raping a white woman, a deed almost universally considered by white southerners as justification for extralegal vengeance.

By the turn of the century, a new system of racial subordination had come into being in the South. In the words of the black historian Rayford Logan, blacks occupied a "separate wing" of the "edifice of national unity," and "on the pediments . . . were carved Exploitation, Disfranchisement, Segregation, Discrimination, Lynching, Contempt." But the white South did not create the new system of white supremacy alone. The effective nullification of the laws and constitutional amendments enacted during Reconstruction could never have occurred without the full acquiescence of the North.

The resurgence of racism was both cause and effect of the nation's abandonment of the Reconstruction ideal of color-blind citizenship. If racism helped to undermine Reconstruction by offering a convenient explanation for southern governments' "failures," the relegation of blacks to the position of an economically dispossessed and politically disempowered caste fit neatly with the general pattern of racial thinking in the late nineteenth century. By 1900, the language of "race"—race conflict, race feeling, race problems—had assumed a central place in American public life, more central, in fact, than during the days of slavery. The supposed inborn capacity of one or another "race"—a term applied not only to blacks but to Italians, Jews, Slavs, and other "new immigrants" then entering the country, as well as to mythical constructs such as "Anglo-Saxons"—was commonly invoked to explain everything from the standard of living of various groups of workers to the worldwide dominance of European powers in the age of imperialism. Just as individual character was thought

to explain success or failure in the economic marketplace, "racial" and "national" character—terms used more or less interchangeably—took on an ever larger role in explaining historical outcomes. Nativists claimed that immigration weakened the fiber of American society by allowing "inferior" races to outnumber sturdy Anglo-Saxons. Meanwhile, the boundaries of nationhood and citizenship, expanded so dramatically in the aftermath of the Civil War, contracted. Beginning in 1882, for example, Congress excluded Chinese immigrants from entering the country. In 1898, the triumphant appearance of the United States on the world stage as an imperial power during the Spanish-American War—in which northern and southern whites fought side by side, while blacks continued to be relegated to segregated units—reinforced the identification of democracy and nationhood with notions of racial superiority. Anglo-Saxons would now take up the "white man's burden" of spreading liberty and self-government throughout the world. Whether in the newly acquired territories of Puerto



The racial justification for American and European imperialism is questioned in this 1899 cartoon, "The White (?) Man's Burden."

Rico and the Philippines or in the South, the domination of nonwhite peoples by white Americans was part of the progress of civilization.

Beginning in 1890, prominent white educators and reformers, including ex-president Hayes, who had driven the final nail into the coffin of Reconstruction, met periodically at Lake Mohonk, New York, for conferences on the "Negro Question." The participants concluded that blacks' problem was different: personal conduct and character, and that self-help, not national assistance or political agitation, offered the best route to racial progress. No blacks were present at the conferences. The only discordant note was sounded by former Reconstruction judge Albion W. Tourgée, who observed that those participating ought to devote some attention to the "white" problem, since "the hate, the oppression, the injustice, are all on our side." Tourgée's, however, was alone voice.

Even within the black community, prominent leaders took to emphasizing economic self-help and individual advancement into the middle class as an alternative to popular mobilization and political agitation. Symbolizing the change was the juxtaposition, in 1895, of the death of Frederick Douglass with Booker T. Washington's widely praised speech at the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition urging blacks to adjust to segregation and forgo agitation for civil rights and suffrage. Like Douglass, Washington had been born a slave, but as a young man during Reconstruction, rather than becoming involved in politics, he had studied at Hampton Institute, a newly established vocational training center for blacks in Virginia. Washington imbibed the ethos of Hampton's founder, General Samuel Armstrong, which emphasized that obtaining farms or skilled jobs was far more important to African Americans just emerging from slavery than the rights of citizenship.

In his Atlanta speech, Washington explicitly repudiated the abolitionist-Reconstruction tradition embodied by Douglass, which stressed ceaseless agitation for full equality. It was more important, Washington declared, for blacks to "prepare" themselves for the exercise of citizenship rights than to achieve them through "artificial forcing." As to segregation, Washington accepted that as well: "In all the things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." "The whole future of the Negro," Washington declared in his autobiography, *Up from Slavery*, rested not on the premature exercise of political power, but "upon the question as to whether or not he should make himself, through his skill, intelligence, and character, . . . of undeniable value to the community."

Given economic independence, political rights would soon follow, Washington insisted. But in the meantime, blacks should accept without

Blacks almost always

challenge their second-class status, while seeking the assistance of white employers and philanthropists who, in a land wracked by labor turmoil and unchecked foreign immigration, would value blacks as a docile, dependable labor force. Indeed, Washington's ascendancy depended in large part on his success in channeling aid from white philanthropists—the Carnegies, Rockefellers, and Peabodys of the North—to his center for vocational education, Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, and to black politicians and newspapers that supported his program. But his base in the black community also arose from a sense that frontal assaults on white power were suicidal, and from the desire of the emerging black middle class for recognition as the true leaders of the race.

Years later, black writer Blyden Jackson recalled growing up in early-twentieth-century Louisville, Kentucky, a city in many ways typical of the New South. It was a divided society. There was the world "where white folks lived . . . the Louisville of the downtown hotels, the lower floors of the big movie houses . . . the inner sanctums of offices where I could go only as a humble client or a menial custodian." Then there was the black world, "the homes, the people, the churches, and the schools," where "everything was black." "I knew," Jackson later recalled, "that there were two Louisvilles and . . . two Americas."

Thus, the aspirations embodied in Reconstruction remained largely unfulfilled at the dawn of the twentieth century. "The slave went free," W. E. B. Du Bois would later write in *Black Reconstruction in America*, "stood a brief moment in the sun, and then moved back again toward slavery." To be sure, the tide of change could never be completely reversed. Despite the North's complicity in segregation and disenfranchisement, the South's racial system remained regional, not national. Segregation was pervasive in the North (although by custom, not law), but northern blacks retained the right to vote, a matter of considerable importance once migration from the South began in significant numbers. Although black schools and colleges remained woefully underfunded, education continued to be available to most African Americans. And the autonomous family and church, pillars of the black community that emerged during Reconstruction, remained vital forces in black life, and the springboard from which future challenges to racial injustice would emerge. Finally, although grievously violated, the laws and constitutional amendments of Reconstruction remained on the books—"sleeping giants," as Charles Sumner had once called them, ready to be reawakened when the struggle for racial justice revived.

When the Reconstruction Act of 1867 was passed, granting southern blacks the right to vote for the first time in American history, Senator Tim-

othy Howe, a Wisconsin Republican, wrote to his niece, "we have cut loose from the whole dead past and have cast our anchor out a hundred years." Howe proved more prescient than he could have imagined in the heady days of 1867. After the end of Reconstruction, it would take nearly a century for the nation to begin to come to terms once again with that era's political and economic agenda, and with the continuing struggle for genuine freedom by the descendants of slavery.