

## Reconstruction: The Revisionist View

*\*\*\*\*The Revisionist View felt that the period of Reconstruction was a noble venture on the part of the North. They felt that Northern influence in the defeated South was made necessary by the South's refusal to accept black citizenship and voting rights as exemplified by the South's opposition to the 14th & 15th Amendments.\*\*\*\**

### A.) The Claim that the North was oppressing the South is not true

- 1.) Before Northerners arrived, blacks still found themselves living in an increasingly segregated society.
- 2.) Blacks had to farm by "sharecropping" and lived on the credit of whatever their crops sold.
  - a.) They became virtual slaves again

"They (Northern Radical Republican leaders) were dismayed by the rumors that the whites were continuing to treat Negroes as though they were slaves and that cruelty and violence toward Negroes prevailed in many portions of the South. They viewed with inexpressible alarm the exclusion of even the literate, responsible Negroes from the franchises and the enactment of Black Codes that bore a striking resemblance the slave codes of the ante-bellum period."

**-Reconstruction pg 332.**

***The Opponent's View:** Early in the twentieth century professor William A. Dunning, also of Columbia University, and a group of talented graduate students wrote a series of monographs that presented a crushing indictment of the republican reconstruction program in the South--a series that made a deep and lasting impression on American historians... The central emphasis of most historical writing about reconstruction has been upon sordid motives and human depravity. Somehow, during the summer of 1865, the nobility and idealism of the war years had died. A synopsis of the Dunning School's version of reconstruction would run something like this: Abraham Lincoln, while the Civil War was still in progress, turned his thoughts to the great problem of reconstruction; and, "with malice toward none and charity for all," this gentle and compassionate man devised a plan that would restore the South to the Union with minimum humiliation and maximum speed. But there had already emerged in Congress a faction of radical Republicans, sometimes called Jacobins or Vindictives, who sought to defeat Lincoln's generous program. Motivated by hatred of the South, by selfish political ambitions, and by crass economic interests, the radicals tried to make the process of reconstruction as humbling, as difficult, and as prolonged as they possibly could.....*

### 3.) Blacks were not a drain on the public's resources as Dunningites claim:

- a.) In North Carolina after the Civil War, historian Roberta Sue Alexander uncovered records showing that, despite white claims that Negroes were a drain on society, in September 1865, only five thousand freedmen out of a population of over 330,000 were receiving aid from the government.

### 4.) The motives of the North were just-not economically motivated

- a.) "Carpetbaggers" went down to bring blacks to power and equality

- 1.) Carpetbaggers helped the South. Southerners had their reasons for despising carpetbaggers-the northern men who moved to the South after the war, became involved in southern politics, and often promoted Radical Republican ideals. To Southerners, carpetbaggers were an unwelcome reminder of their recent defeat by the North. They resented Northerner's controlling their public offices, especially at a time when the majority of white southern men were disenfranchised according to the disabilities placed on former Confederates in the Fourteenth Amendment. Carpetbag politicians could not possibly represent the feelings and beliefs of their southern constituencies, Southerners felt, especially when most carpetbaggers were Radical Republicans in a regions that was largely Southern Democrat.

Furthermore, carpetbaggers were suspected of everything from fraud and corruption to instigating race wars between blacks and whites. Most northern Republicans, however, did not view the matter in this way. They saw a defeated and ravaged South, full of untrustworthy former Rebels, that desperately needed an infusion of northern enterprise and Republican sentiments. They believed that Southerners' complaints about carpetbaggers had their roots in southern prejudice against the North and were not due to any actual wrongdoing on the part of the carpetbagger governments.

-*Oliver Morton*

b.) The "Freedman's Bureau" was set up. It gave blacks a change to learn and be productive.

- 1.) Teachers, ministers and farmers all taught blacks how to work
- 2.) Issued clothing to the freedmen.
- 3.) Made sure that Southern plantation owners would not overwork and underpay the freedmen
- 4.) Established schools and provided housing
- 5.) Lacked sufficient manpower to impact change in the South

5.) Black Codes established in 1865

a.) Regulated what blacks could and couldn't do, They included provisions such as:

- \*No blacks could own a business
- \*All blacks had to sign a 1-year labor contract--wages payable at year's end
- \*No black could travel without permission
- \*Black felons to be "sold" into service to a "master"
- \*No vote
- \*No Jury Duty or testimony in court for any black

1.) Texas Law in 1866 Read: Ch. 73, p.70- Defines "persons of color." the sole object of this law was to defeat equality before the law-justice; to discriminate on account of race. This is subject to the same objections. Ch. 59, p.59- Restricts the right of persons of color to testify in certain cases. Subject to the same objections. Ch. 128, p.131- Defines the rights of persons of color. Subject to the same objections. It is restrictive, giving them no more rights than free persons of color had during the existence of African slavery. It takes special care not to declare them to be "citizens." Ch. 135, p.160- Exempting from sale under execution a certain amount of the property of every "citizen." A very ingenious thrust at the freedmen. /subject to the same objection. Ch. 92, p.90- Makes the carrying of fire-arms on enclosed lands without consent of the land-owner, an offense. It was meant to operate against freedmen alone, and hence is subject to the same objections. Ch. 146, p.170- As to public schools for whites (whites). Subject to the same objections. Ch. 154, p.195- Providing for indigent white children (only). subject to the same objections. Ch. 164, p.203- Donates land to white settlers (only). Subject to the same objections. Ch. 180, p.225- Jury law for whites only. Subject to the objections. This pretended law has been obviated by the jury order of Brevet Major General Griffin. Ch. 102, p.97- Provides for special cars on railroads for freedmen. Subject to the same objections, and hence obviated by an order of Brevet Major General Griffin. CH. 111, p.102- The vagrant act. The latter part of sec. 1 of this act is insidiously leveled against the freedmen, who are not even mentioned as such in it. Subject to the same objections that lie to the whole of the system of which it forms a part. Ch. 125, p.126- The "stay law," delaying the collection of debts. It prevents freedmen dependent upon their immediate earnings from collecting their wages. Subject to the same objections that lie to the whole system. Ch. 64, p.64- Gives a lien on crops. An ingenious device, whereby a man who rents land and hires laborers to cultivate it may be enabled to avoid paying the laborers. Subject to the same objections. Believed to have been obviated by an order of General Kiddoo.

b.) Amendments passed to give blacks equal rights

- 1.) The 14th amendment promised all freed men equal protection of the laws
- 2.) The 15th amendment gave blacks the right to vote

B.) Revisionist leaders

- 1.) W.E.B. Dubois - historian who said that crime in black neighborhoods was due to the environment in which they lived. Blacks lacked the proper education and they needed

I'D SAY WE WERE SECOND-CLASS CITIZENS, BUT I'M NOT SURE WERE CITIZENS.



proper schools that would lead them to jobs of equal opportunity.

a.) "We may recognize three things which Negro rule gave to the South:

- 1.) Democratic Government
- 2.) Free public schools
- 3.) New Social legislation....In South Carolina there was before the war a property qualification for officeholders, and, in part, for voters. The Reconstruction constitution of 1868, on the other hand, was a modern democratic document...preceded by a broad Declaration of Rights which did away with property qualifications and based representation directly on population instead of property."

b.) *Charles Sumner* - Massachusetts senator who fought for Negro suffrage during reconstruction

- 1.) Used his position in government to win over rights for blacks.
- 2.) Outspoken political leader for equal rights for blacks
- 3.) "...The Dunningites are guilty of distortion by exaggeration, by a lack of perspective, by superficial analysis, and by overemphasis. They make corruption a central theme of their narratives, but they overlook constructive accomplishments. They give insufficient attention to the men who transcended the greed of an age...Among these men were the humanitarians who organized Freedmen's Aid Societies to help four million southern Negroes make the difficult transition from slavery to freedom, and the missionaries and teachers who went into the South on slender budgets to build churches and schools for the freemen. Under their auspices the Negroes first began to learn the responsibilities and obligations of freedom. Thus the training of Negroes for citizenship had its successful beginnings in the years of reconstruction."

-*Kenneth Stampp, The Era of Reconstruction, 1865, 1877.*

c.) *Thaddeus Stevens* - Worked on the Pennsylvania state legislature and in Congress to assure equality for ex-slaves

- 1.) Helped many captured fugitives avoid return to the South by serving as their lawyer. (opposed fugitive slave act before war)
- 2.) Was a leader against slavery. He was a "free-soiler."
  - a.) His continual actions to oppose slavery and then extend rights to blacks goes against the Traditionalist's analysis that the northern goal in the Reconstruction south was to selfishly take economic advantage of the defeated south
  - b.) the traditionalist interpretation of Reconstruction was rooted in "the conviction that the Negro belongs to an innately inferior race."

-*Francis Butler Simkins, Journal of Southern History, 1939*

3.) Stevens was instrumental in bringing about black suffrage

- a.) "If impartial suffrage is excluded in the rebel states, then every one of them is sure to send a solid rebel representative delegation to Congress, and cast a solid rebel electoral vote. They, with their kindred Copperheads of the North, would always elect the President and control Congress. While Slavery sat upon her defiant throne, and insulted and intimidated the trembling North, the South frequently divided on questions of policy between Whigs and Democrats, and gave victory alternately to the sections. Now, you must divide them between loyalists, without regard to color, and disloyalists, or you will be the perpetual vassals of the free-trade, irritated, revengeful South. For these, among other reasons, I am for Negro suffrage in every rebel state. If it be just, it should not be denied; if it be necessary, it should be adopted; if it be a punishment to traitors, they deserve it."

-*Thaddeus Stevens, 1867*

- C.) The Dunning School grossly exaggerated the "evils" of reconstruction
- 1.) Those who wrote the traditional view of Reconstruction were racist
    - a.) Rhodes' called blacks "the most inferior race"
  - 2.) In fact, Reconstruction had noble goals
    - a.) Radical Reconstruction was a long overdue attempt to bring justice and progress to the South. It was sustained in the South not only by federal forces but by determined black support. Its defeat was brought about by brutal terrorism and northern betrayal.  
*-Radical Reconstruction in Action*

## Reconstruction Was Not a Failure

*Eric Foner, a professor of history at Columbia University, is the author of numerous books, including Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution. In the following excerpt from his American Heritage article "The New View of Reconstruction," Foner contends that the civil rights reforms of Radical Reconstruction were so extraordinary for the time that, despite later setbacks, reconstruction was a remarkable success.*

The United States was not the only nation to experience emancipation in the nineteenth century. Neither plantation slavery nor abolition was unique to the United States. But Reconstruction was. In a comparative perspective Radical Reconstruction stands as a remarkable experiment, the only effort of a society experiencing abolition to bring the former slaves within the umbrella of equal citizenship. Because the Radicals did not achieve everything they wanted, historians have lately tended to play down the stunning departure represented by black suffrage and officeholding. Former slaves, most fewer than two years removed from bondage, debated the fundamental questions of the polity: What is a republican form of government? Should the state provide equal education for all? How could political equality be reconciled with a society in which property was so unequally distributed? There was something inspiring in the way such men met the challenge of Reconstruction. . . .

Few modern scholars believe the Reconstruction governments established in the South in 1867 and 1868 fulfilled the aspirations of their humble constituents. While their achievements in such realms as education, civil rights, and the economic rebuilding of the South are now widely appreciated, historians today believe they failed to affect either the economic plight of the emancipated slave or the ongoing transformation of independent white farmers into cotton tenants. Yet their opponents did perceive the Reconstruction governments in precisely this way—as representatives of a revolution that had put the bottom rail, both racial and economic, on top. . . .

The ultimate outcome underscores the uniqueness of Reconstruction itself. Alone among the societies that abolished slavery in the nineteenth century, the United States, for a moment, offered the freedmen a measure of political control over their own destinies. However brief its sway, Reconstruction allowed scope for a remarkable political and social mobilization of the black community. It opened doors of opportunity that could never be completely closed.

## VIEWPOINT 2

*"What the South needs is emigrants with carpet bags well filled with capital to revive industry, organize labor, and develop her resources."*

# Carpetbaggers Have Helped the South

Oliver Morton (1823-1877)

Southerners had their reasons for despising carpetbaggers—the northern men who moved to the South after the war, became involved in southern politics, and often promoted Radical Republican ideals. To Southerners, carpetbaggers were an unwelcome reminder of their recent defeat by the North. They resented Northerners' controlling their public offices, especially at a time when the majority of white southern men were disenfranchised according to the disabilities placed on former Confederates in the Fourteenth Amendment. Carpetbag politicians could not possibly represent the feelings and beliefs of their southern constituencies; Southerners felt, especially when most carpetbaggers were Radical Republicans in a region that was largely Southern Democrat. Furthermore, carpetbaggers were suspected of everything from fraud and corruption to instigating race wars between blacks and whites.

Most northern Republicans, however, did not view the matter in this way. They saw a defeated and ravaged South, full of untrustworthy former Rebels, that desperately needed an infusion of northern enterprise and Republican sentiments. They believed that Southerners' complaints about carpetbaggers had their roots in southern prejudice against the North and were not due to any actual wrongdoing on the part of the carpetbagger governments.

The viewpoint that follows contains excerpts from an 1871 speech given by Senator Oliver Morton of Indiana, a leading Radical Republican who was prominent in the impeachment trial of

Oliver Morton, from *Great Debates in American History*, vol. 8, Marion Mills Miller, ed., Current Literature Co., 1913.

President Andrew Johnson and who later served on the electoral commission in the disputed presidential contest of 1876. In his address, Morton argues that the war-torn South needs the influx of northern newcomers—with their large capital and boundless energy—to aid in rebuilding its economy and political structure. Criticizing those who claim Northerners have no right to move South or take part in southern government, Morton reminds his listeners that the Constitution guarantees the right to emigrate from state to state.

When the war ended many men who had been in the Union army remained in the South, intending to make it their home and identify themselves with its fortunes. Others emigrated from the North, taking with them large capital, believing that the South presented fine prospects for business, individual success, and general prosperity. In the reconstruction of the Southern States it so happened, and was, in fact, necessary, that many of these men should be elected to office and take a leading part in the government of the States in which they settled. This was their right and the natural result of the circumstances by which they were surrounded; but they were denounced as adventurers and intruders, and the odious slang of "carpetbaggers" was reechoed by the Democracy of the North, who sent word to the South that these men had no rights they were bound to respect.


### Free to Emigrate

Emigration is a part of the genius of the American people. They are composed of those who came from abroad or their descendants. To emigrate from State to State, and there to enjoy all the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States, is guaranteed by the Constitution, and it is an odious and anti-American doctrine that a man has no right to be elected to an office in a State because he was not born in it or has not lived in it many years. When we consider the circumstances under which the Territories were settled and new States formed, the rapid transition of our population from one part of the country to another, we shall comprehend the infamy and villainy of this slang against "carpet-baggers."

Why, sir, it is the same spirit in another form which a few years ago attempted to deny equal political rights to men of foreign birth and insisted that the offices should be held only by those who were born upon the soil; and it is humiliating that any por-

tion of the people of the North should endeavor to excite the people of the South against their own citizens who have gone there to find homes. What the South needs is emigrants with carpet bags well filled with capital to revive industry, organize labor, and develop her resources; and the howl against this class of citizens is insane and suicidal.

AND THAT WASN'T ALL. IN DECEMBER, 1865, THE KUKLUX KLAN WAS BORN. THE KLAN AND OTHER CAMPS TERRORIZED BLACKS ACROSS THE SOUTH, COMMITTING MORE THAN ONE MURDER A DAY IN LOUISIANA ALONE. AND THE CHANCES OF BRINGING A KLANSMAN TO JUSTICE—?



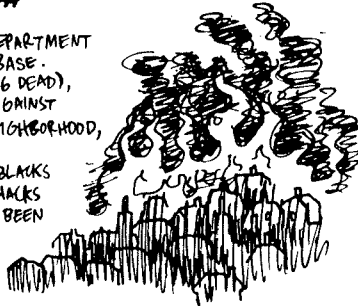
THIS IS SOUTHERN JUSTICE!

OH, PARDON ME, BRUH!WH!



ON MAY 1, IN MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE, A BLACK SOLDIER TRIPPED A WHITE POLICEMAN.

THE MEMPHIS POLICE DEPARTMENT ATTACKED THE ARMY BASE. AFTER A SHOOT OUT (6 DEAD), THE POLICE TURNED AGAINST A SOUTH MEMPHIS NEIGHBORHOOD, AND BY THE TIME THE INCIDENT ENDED, 46 BLACKS LAY DEAD, AND 90 SHACKS AND 12 SCHOOLS HAD BEEN DESTROYED.

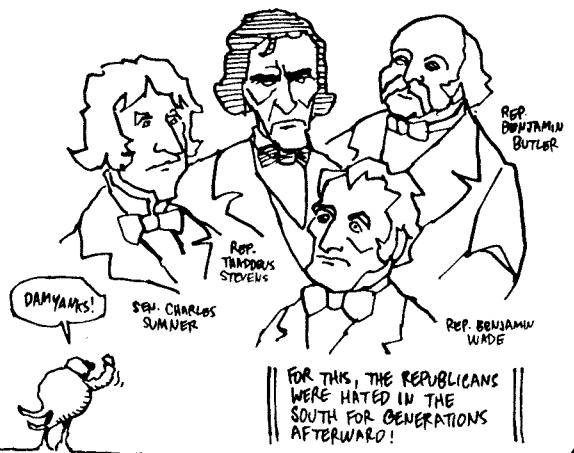


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TO THE HORRIFIED MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, IT SOUNDED AS IF THE SOUTH WANTED TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK TO A PRE-WAR SETTING!



SO CONGRESS—WHICH WAS STILL AN ALL-NORTHERN CONGRESS, MOSTLY REPUBLICAN—BEGAN DEVSING WAYS TO PROTECT THE BLACKS AND TO KEEP THE OLD SOUTH'S MENTALITY OUT OF THE NEW SOUTH.



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TABLE 9. EVENTS OF RECONSTRUCTION, 1863-1877

Date	General tendency	National events	State events
1863	Presidential Reconstruction	Lincoln Plan announced.	Governments set up in Louisiana, Arkansas.
1864		Wade-Davis Plan pocket-vetoes by Lincoln.	
1865		Lee surrenders.	Governments partly functioning in Virginia, Tennessee.
		Lincoln shot.	
1866		Johnson Plan announced.	
		Freedman's Bureau bill and Civil Rights bill vetoed.	All remaining states reorganized under Johnson Plan.
		Fourteenth Amendment submitted to states.	Tennessee readmitted.
		Congressional elections: Radical gains.	
1867	Height of Radical Reconstruction	Reconstruction Acts.	Military Rule in effect.
		Tenure of Office Act.	
1868		Impeachment of Johnson.	North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Arkansas readmitted under Radical governments.
		Fourteenth Amendment in effect.	
		Grant elected.	
1869			Conservative government restored in Tennessee.
1870	Conflict	Fifteenth Amendment in effect.	Virginia readmitted under moderate government.
		First Enforcement Act.	Moderate government restored in North Carolina.
		Congressional elections: Republican majorities reduced.	Mississippi, Texas, Georgia readmitted under radical government.
1871		Second and third Enforcement Acts.	Conservative government restored in Georgia.
1872		Grant re-elected.	
1873			
1874	Restoration of White Rule	Congressional elections: Democrats gain control of House.	Conservative government restored in Arkansas, Alabama, Texas.
1875		Civil Rights Act (declared invalid 1883).	
1876		Hayes-Tilden disputed election.	Conservative government restored in Mississippi.
1877			Federal troops removed from Louisiana, South Carolina. Conservative government restored in Florida, South Carolina, Louisiana.