

Reconstruction—The Unfinished and Overthrown Revolution

Dr. Kidada E. Williams
Associate Professor of History
Wayne State University

Key Questions

- What was Reconstruction intended to do?
- What did the various plans entail?
- How did African Americans want to reconstruct American freedom?
- What was the Second Founding? What did it achieve? What remained unfinished?
- Why and how did Reconstruction End?

The Arc of Reconstruction

- War-time Reconstruction
- Presidential Reconstruction
- Reconstruction in the North & West
- Congressional Reconstruction – The Second Founding
- Black Reconstruction
- Reconstruction's Overthrow

Reconstruction

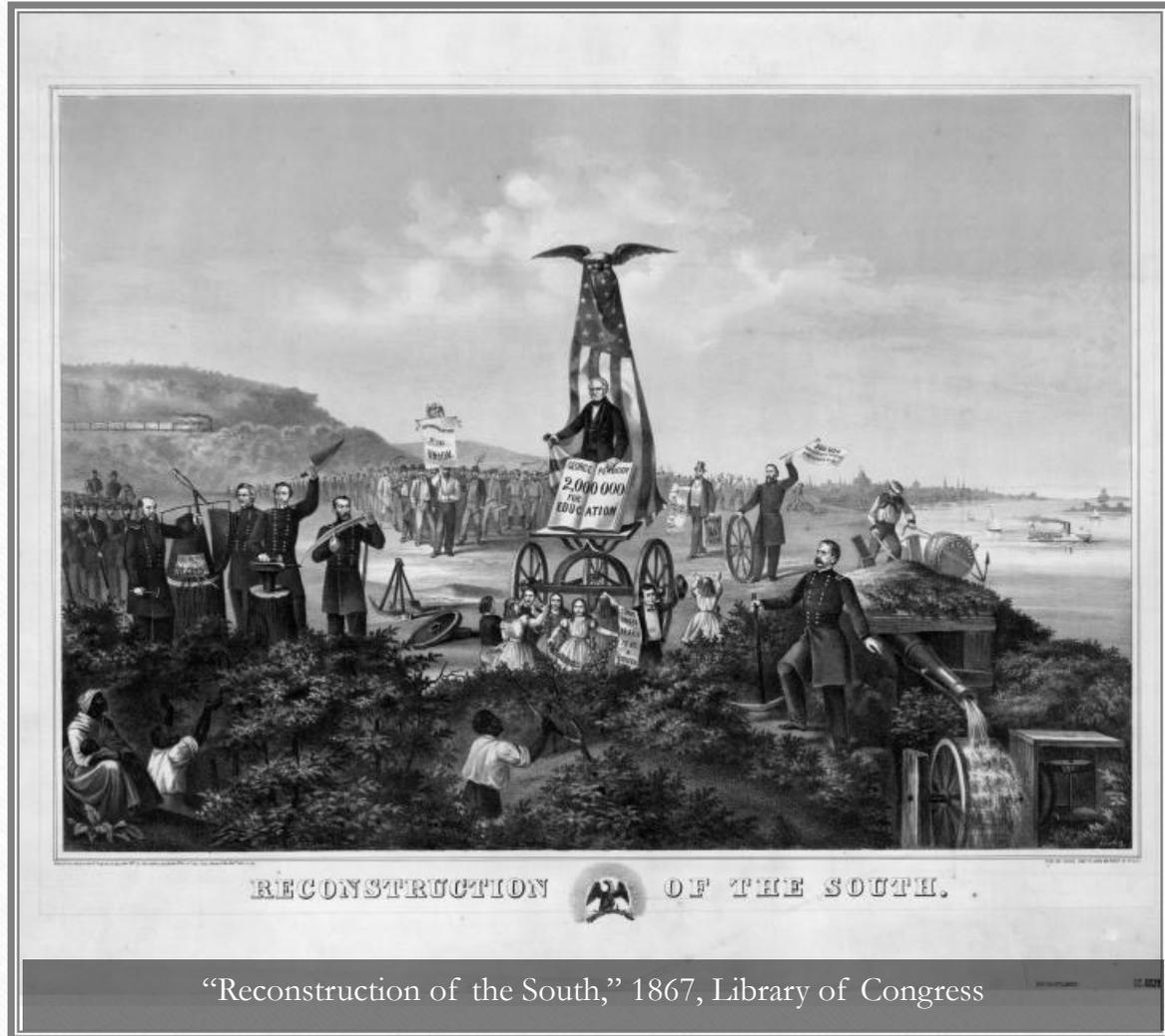
- Reuniting the country
- Increase federal power and control over states re: citizens' rights
- Fights for political supremacy between conservatives & progressives and the President and Congress



“Reconstruction,” 1867, Library of Congress

Reconstruction in the South

- Returning seceded states to the Union fold
 - Punishing and Rehabilitating Confederates



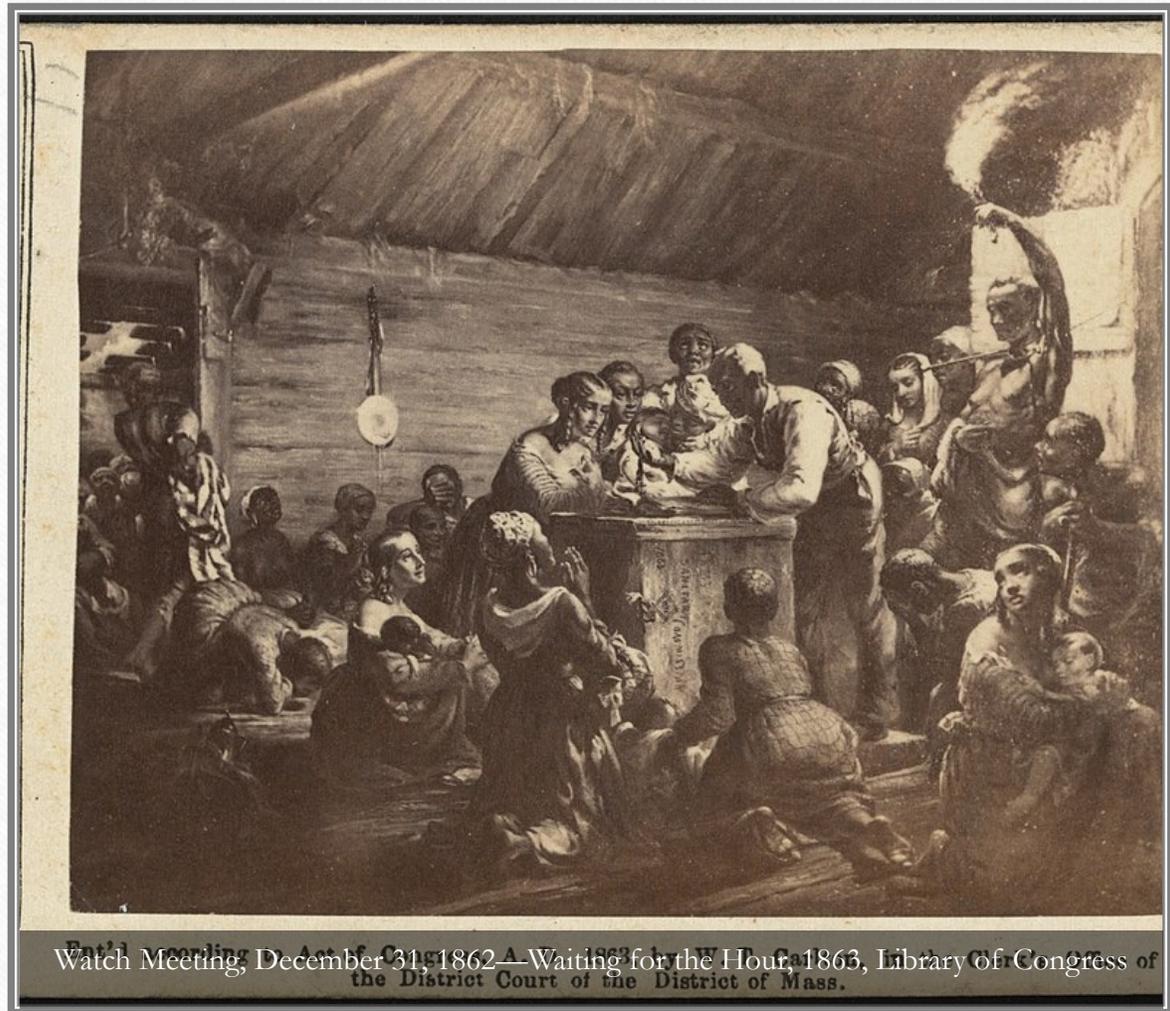
Reconstructing American Freedom

- Overseeing the transition from slavery to freedom and integrating newly *and* long free African Americans into the nation body politic
- Rights Revolution



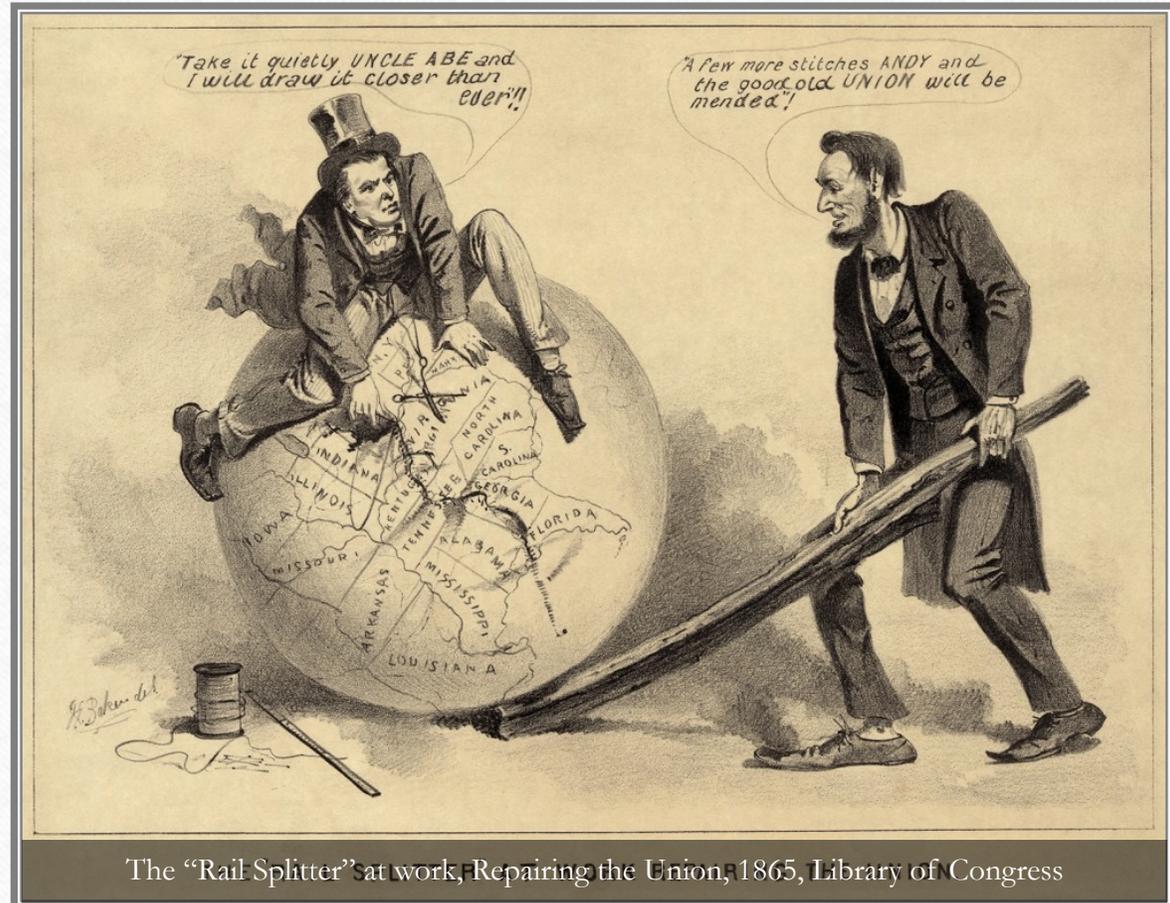
Wartime Reconstruction

- Lincoln's Reconstruction, 63-65
- Emancipation Proclamation (1863)
- Decide the fate of formerly enslaved Americans and their free Black counterparts
- Sherman's Field Orders, No 15
- Abolish slavery by constitutional amendment



Wartime Reconstruction

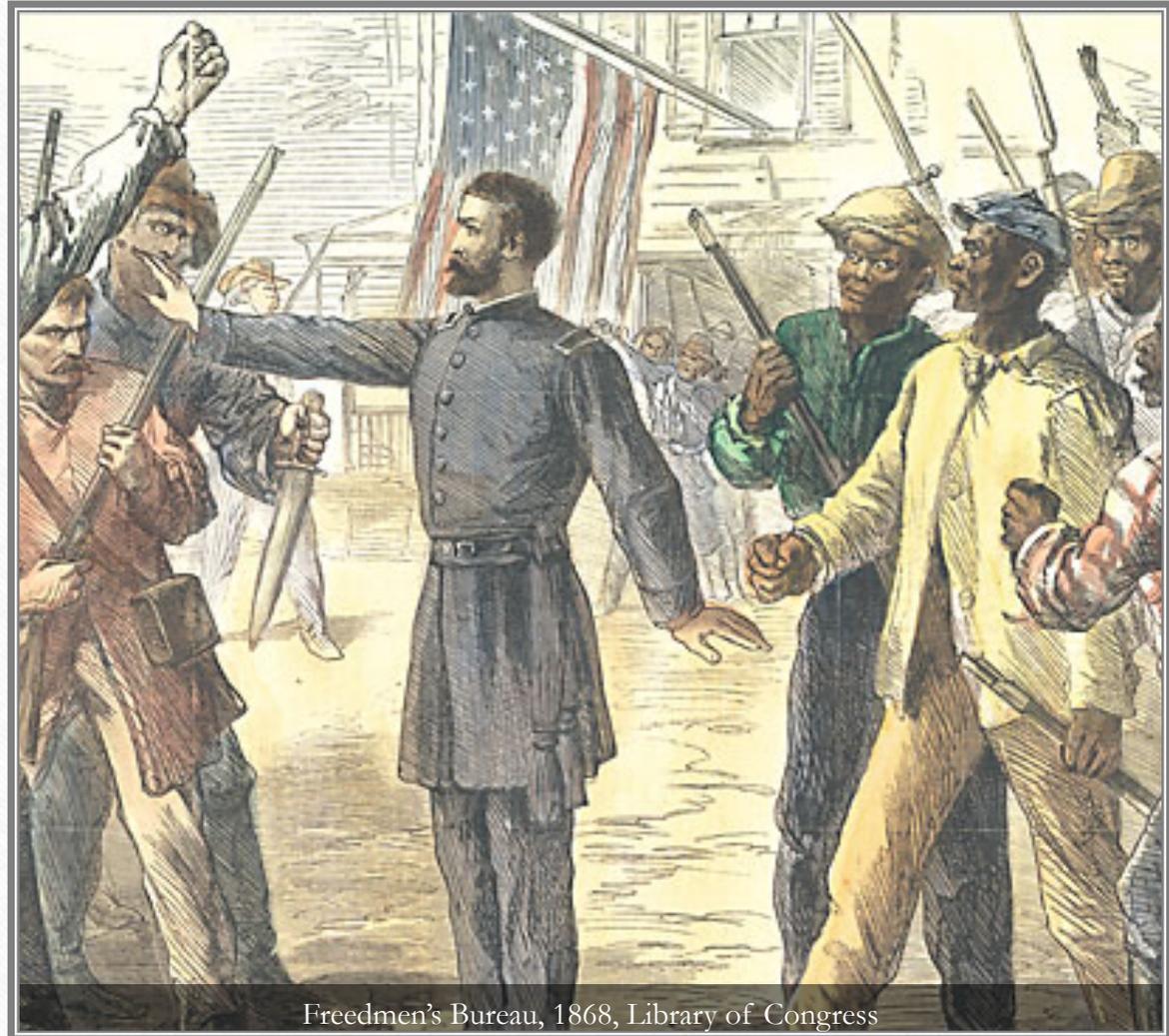
- Lincoln's 10% Plan (1863)
- "Proc of Amnesty and Reconstruction"—full pardons to those who swear allegiance to the U.S. and accept emancipation.
- Wade-Davis Bill (1864)
- Assassination ends wartime Reconstruction
- Thirteenth Amendment Passed



The "Rail Splitter" at work, Repairing the Union, 1865, Library of Congress

Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, & Abandoned Lands

- Estd to ease the transition from slavery to freedom, manage lands
- Buffer between enslavers, devastated and poor whites, and long and newly free African Americans
- Military authority to settle conflicts and labor disputes



Freedmen's Bureau, 1868, Library of Congress

Thirteenth Amendment

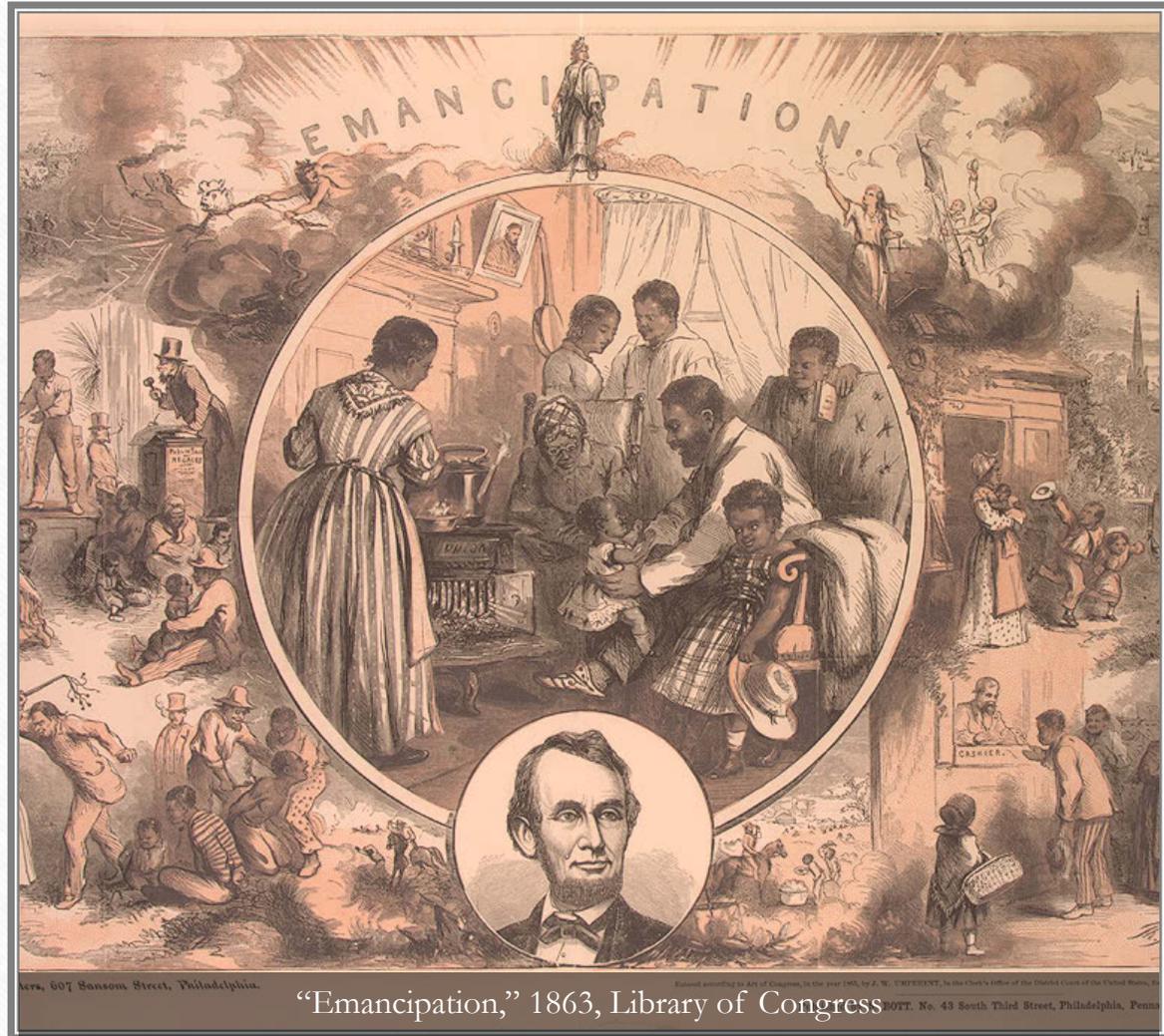
*Neither slavery nor
involuntary servitude, except
as a punishment for crime, ...
shall exist within the United
States, or any place subject to their
jurisdiction.*



"Mustered out" Colored volunteers at Little Rock, Arkansas, 1866. Library of Congress

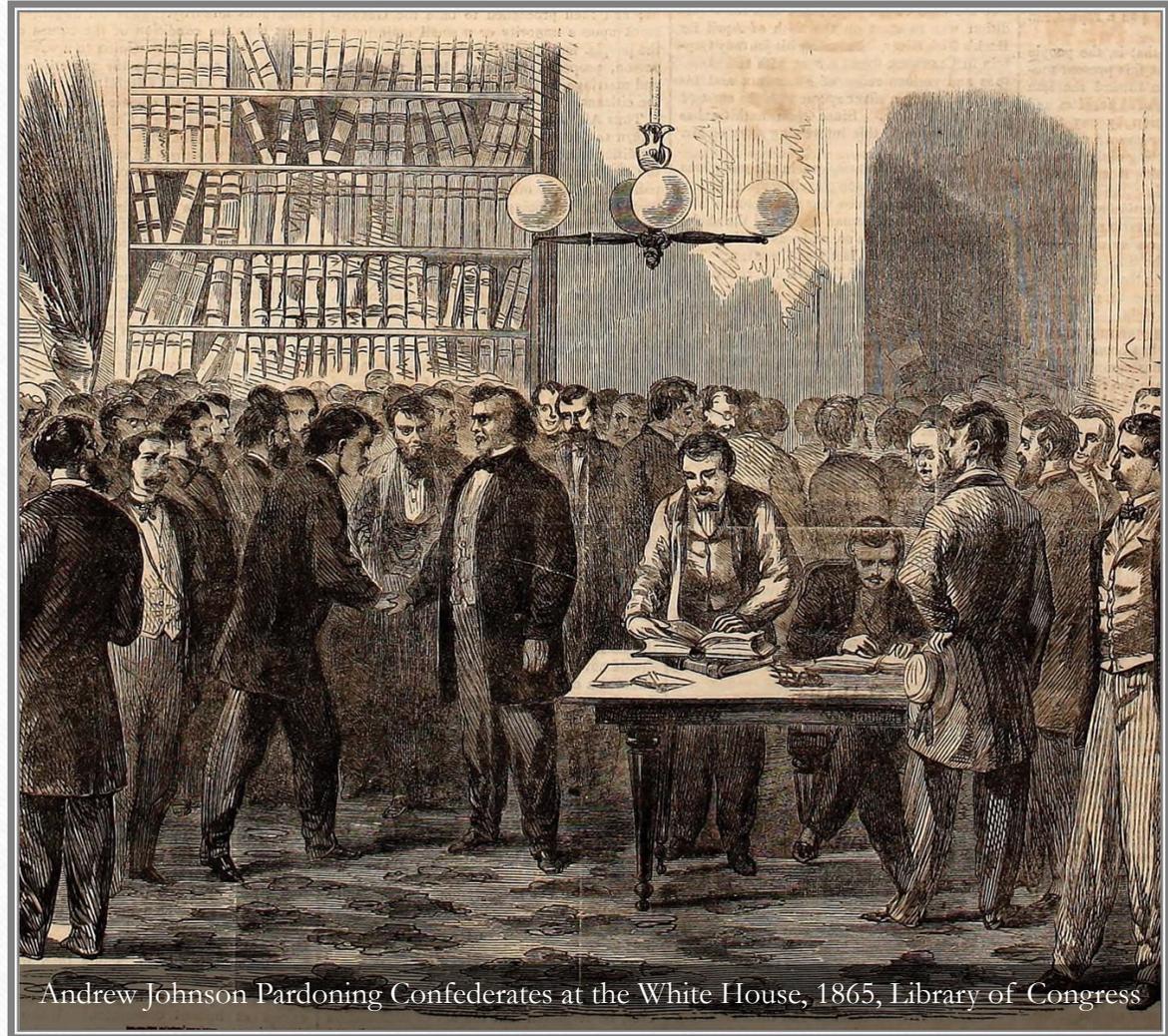
Universal Slave Emancipation

- African Americans want justice after more than 2 centuries of slavery
- Believed emancipation meant everything slavery did not



White Resentment of Reconstruction

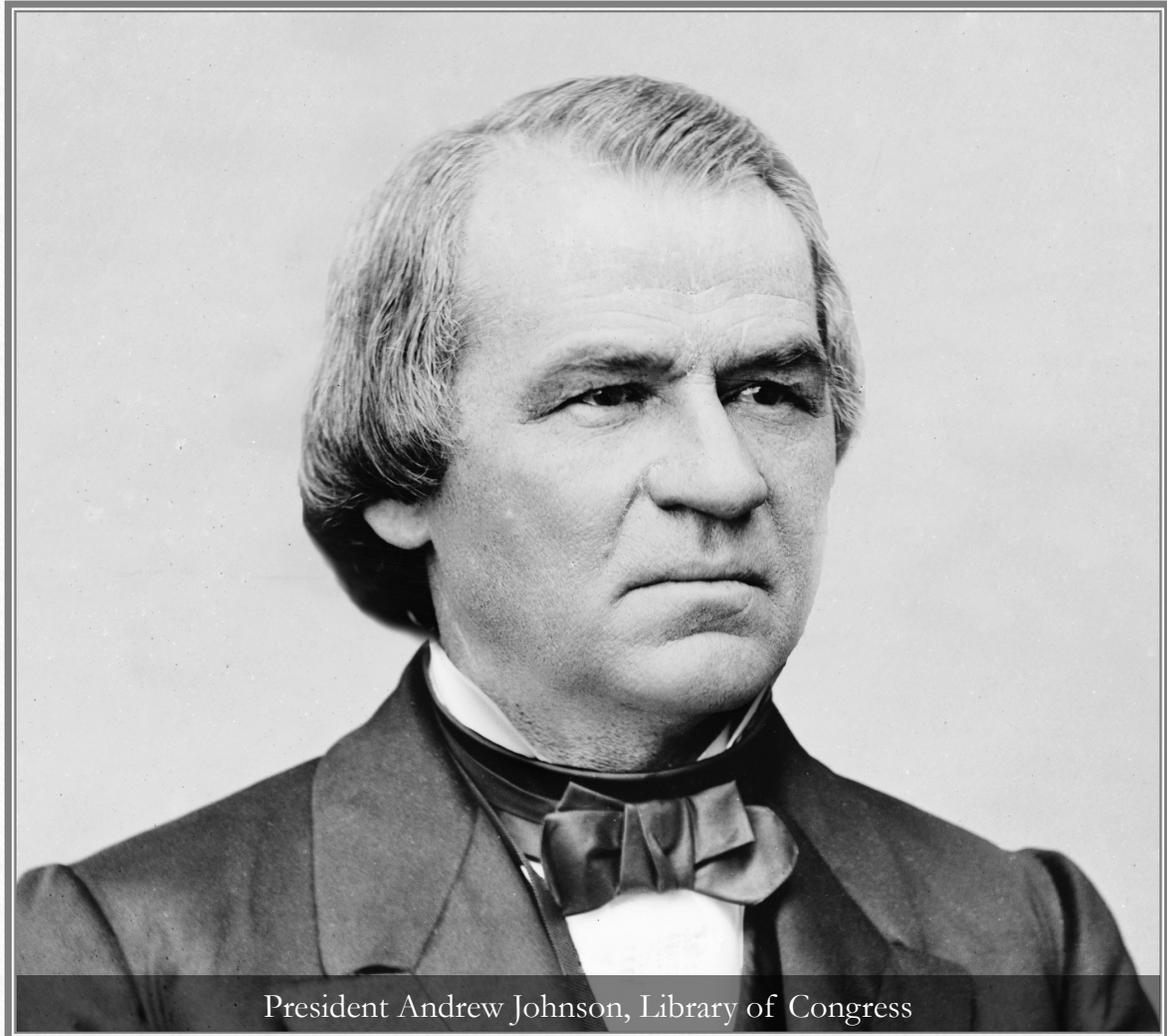
- Resentment over military defeat and African Americans' freedom and their pressing for equality builds.
- Former enslavers lash out as do whites who lose the possibility of "making a world out of slaves."
- A counter-insurgency against Reconstruction emerges.
- White resentment will be bolstered by President Andrew Johnson.
- It will bring down Reconstruction.



Andrew Johnson Pardoning Confederates at the White House, 1865, Library of Congress

Presidential Reconstruction

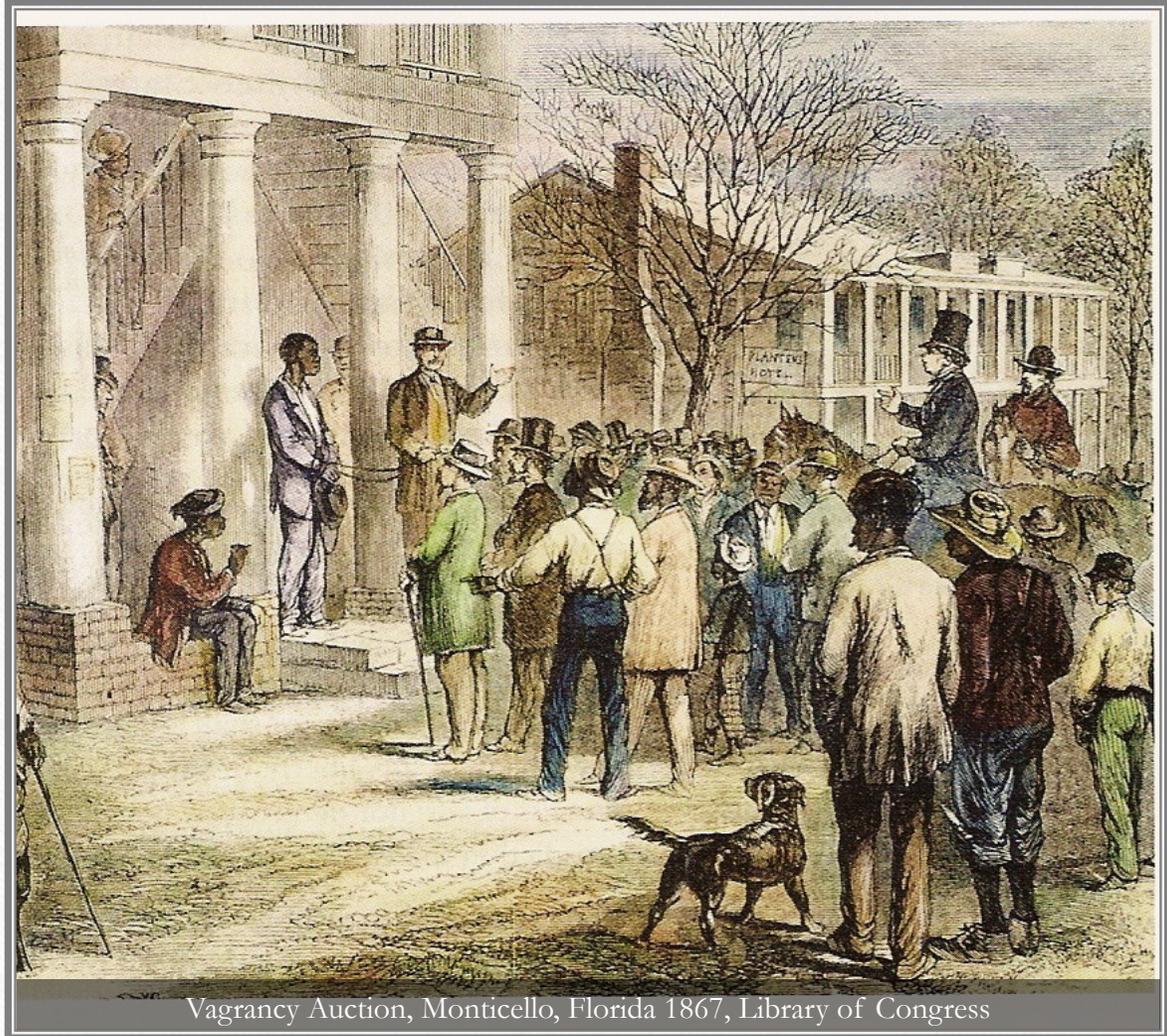
- Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction, 1865-66
- Quick readmission—Ratify the Thirteenth Amendment
- Revoke declarations of secession
- Take an oath of allegiance to the Union
- Receive return of all non-human property
- This would revoke Sherman's Order No 15 aka 40 Acres and a Mule



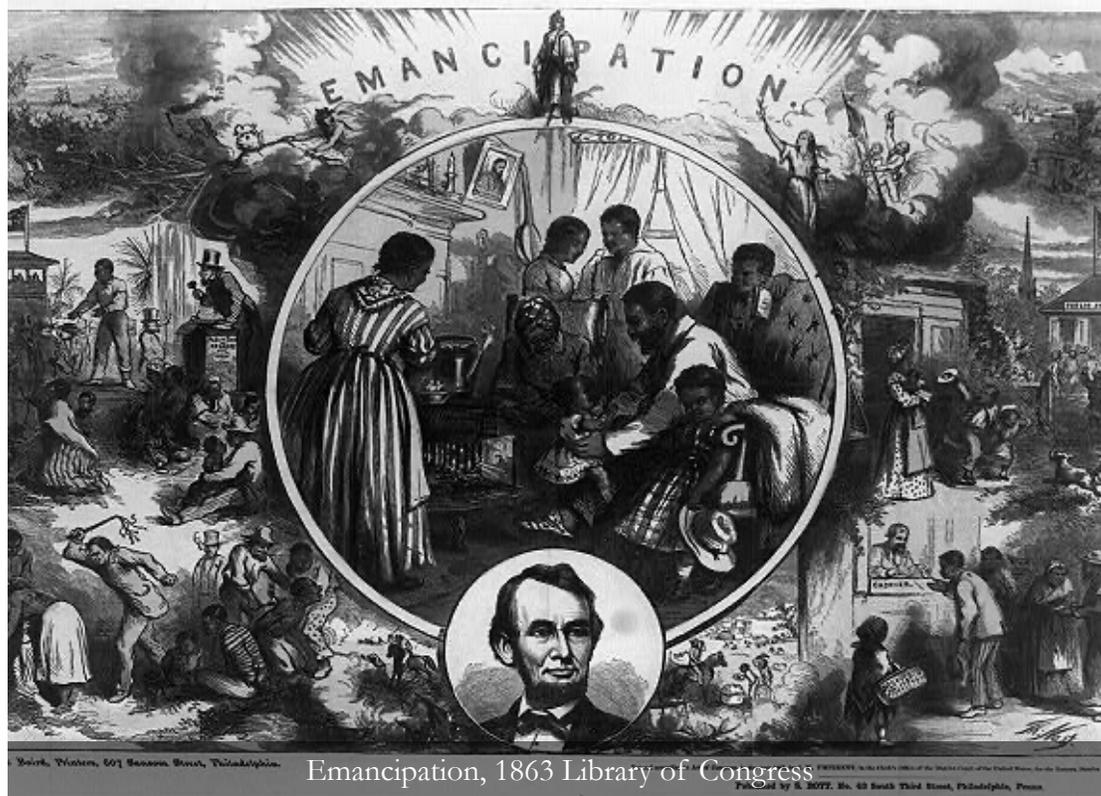
President Andrew Johnson, Library of Congress

Black Codes

- 1865-1866, southern governments moved to restore the antebellum social and economic order
- Restrict freedom and ensure African Americans' availability as cheap, exploitable labor
- The Black Codes resembled antebellum Slave Codes and northern and western states' Black Laws but were more restrictive
- Vagrancy auction blocks
- Apprenticeships—for black children & youth



Justice



- Family reunification and recognition
- Citizenship rights
- Self-determination--land
- Make a fair and decent living and reap the fruits of their labor
- Education & Religion
- Suffrage & Officeholding

Vanguard of Freedom

- Enslavement and discrimination gave African Americans, like Elizabeth Keckley, a different vision of freedom.
- Having been denied literal freedom as well as the blessings of American freedom and liberty, **no group of Americans had spent more time thinking about everything it meant than they had.**
- They are at the vanguard of Reconstructing American freedom



Susie King Taylor, 1902, Library of Congress

Vanguard of Freedom

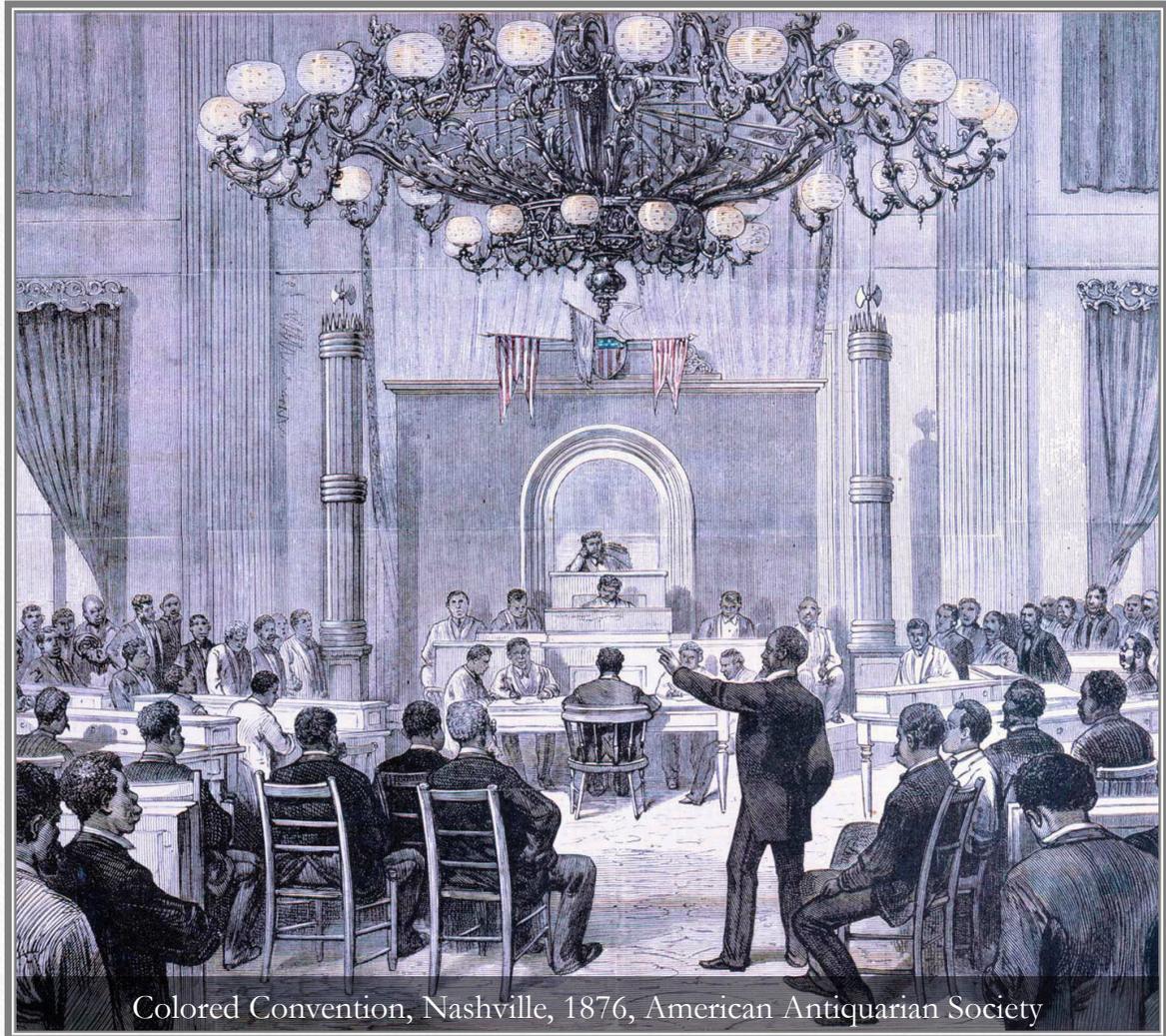
Demanded from progressive members of Congress all **privileges whites took for granted**—civil, political, public, and legal rights—birthright citizenship, equal protection under the law, due process under law, voting rights, unrestricted access to places of public accommodation, the right to serve on juries and in elected office, equal access to employment.



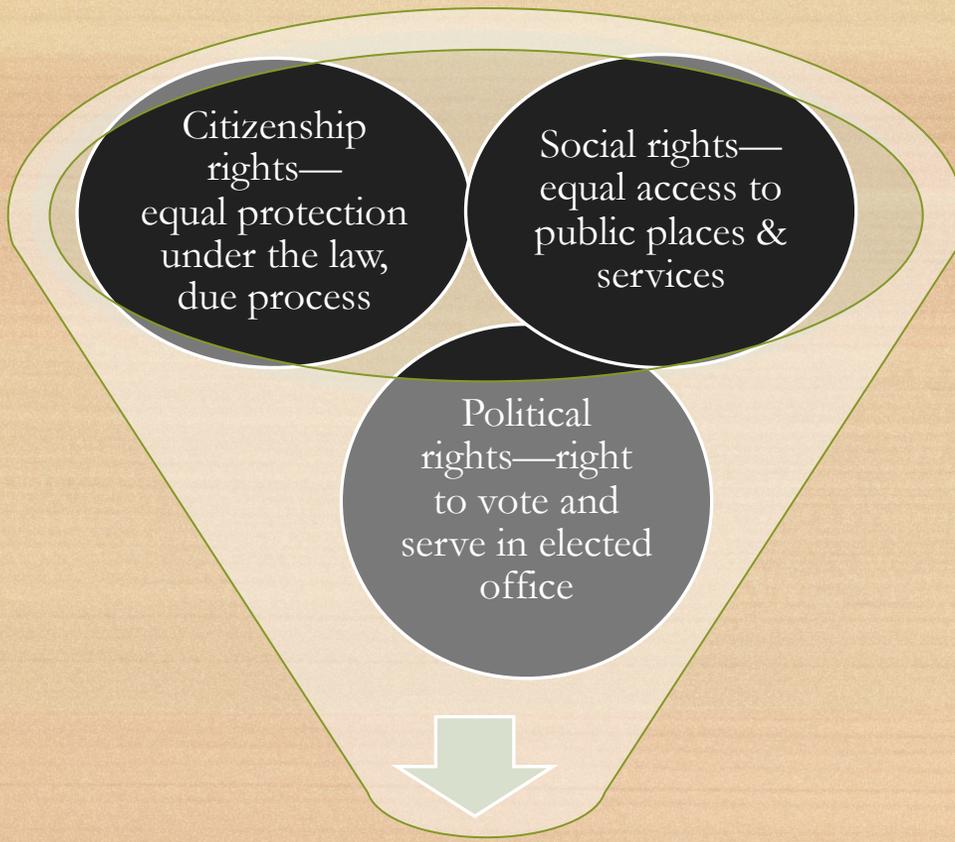
Vanguard of Freedom

*“We claim exactly the same rights,
privileges and immunities as are
enjoyed by white men—we ask
nothing more, and [we] will be
content with nothing less.”*

~Address, Colored Men Mass
Convention, Mobile, AL, 1867



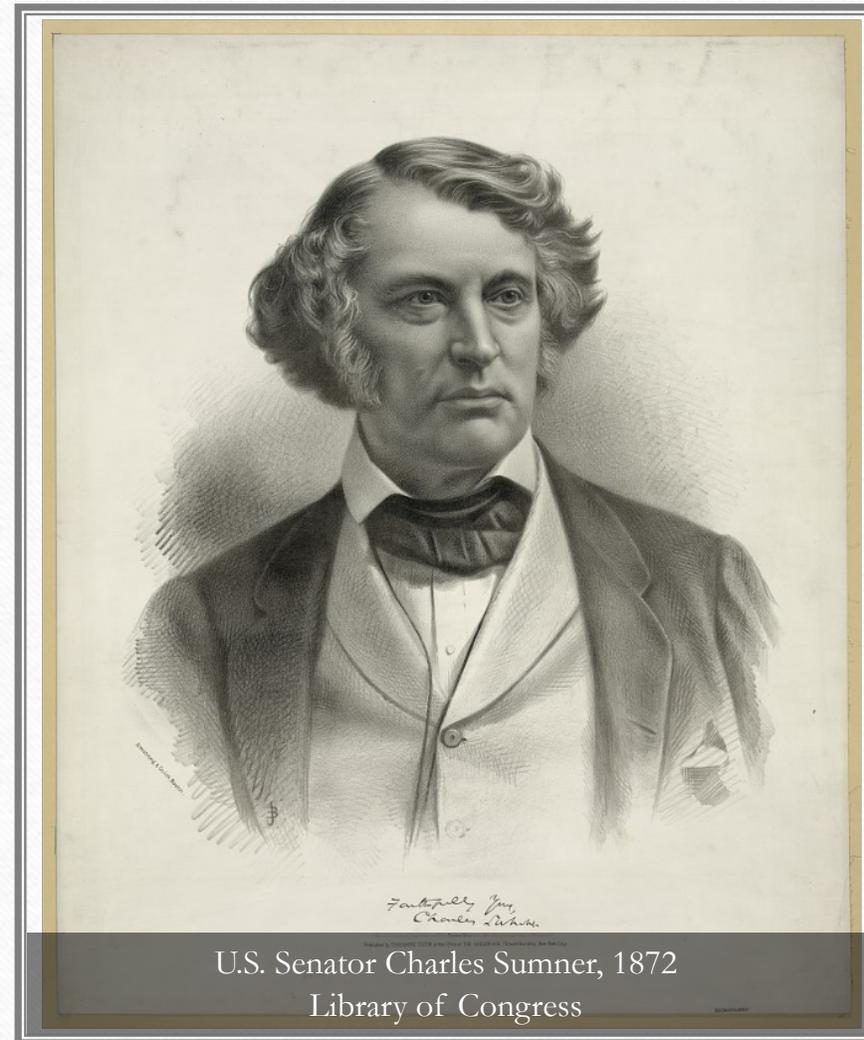
Colored Convention, Nashville, 1876, American Antiquarian Society



To protect their freedom and make the nation honor its creed,
African Americans fought for rights and privileges we often take for granted and now call
Civil Rights

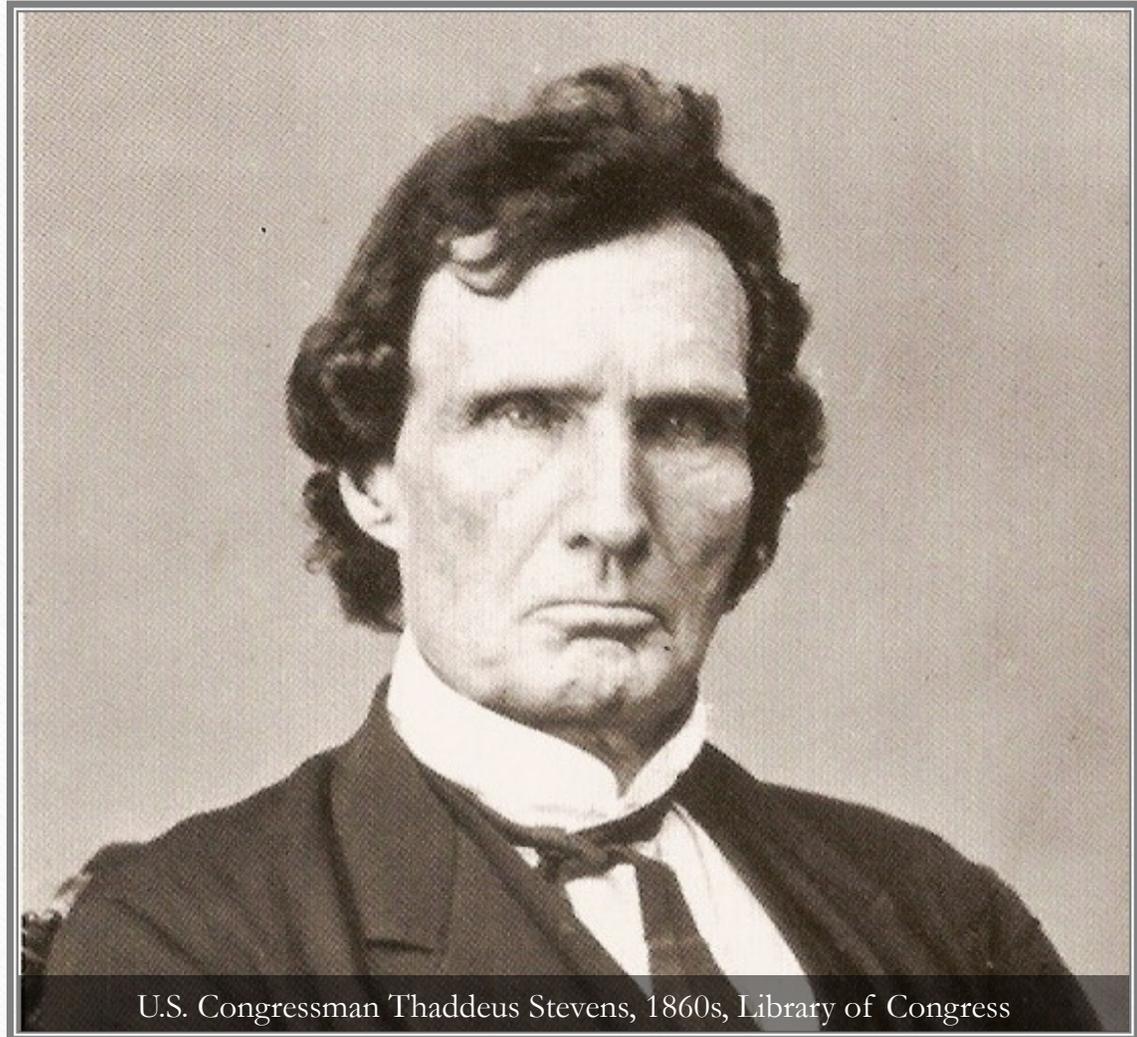
Congressional Reconstruction

- The 39th Congress, 1865-66
- Fury over racist violence, Presidential Reconstruction, and Black Codes instigates a congressional takeover by progressives Senators like Charles Sumner
- They facilitate the rights revolution African Americans and white abolitionists wanted



Congressional Reconstruction

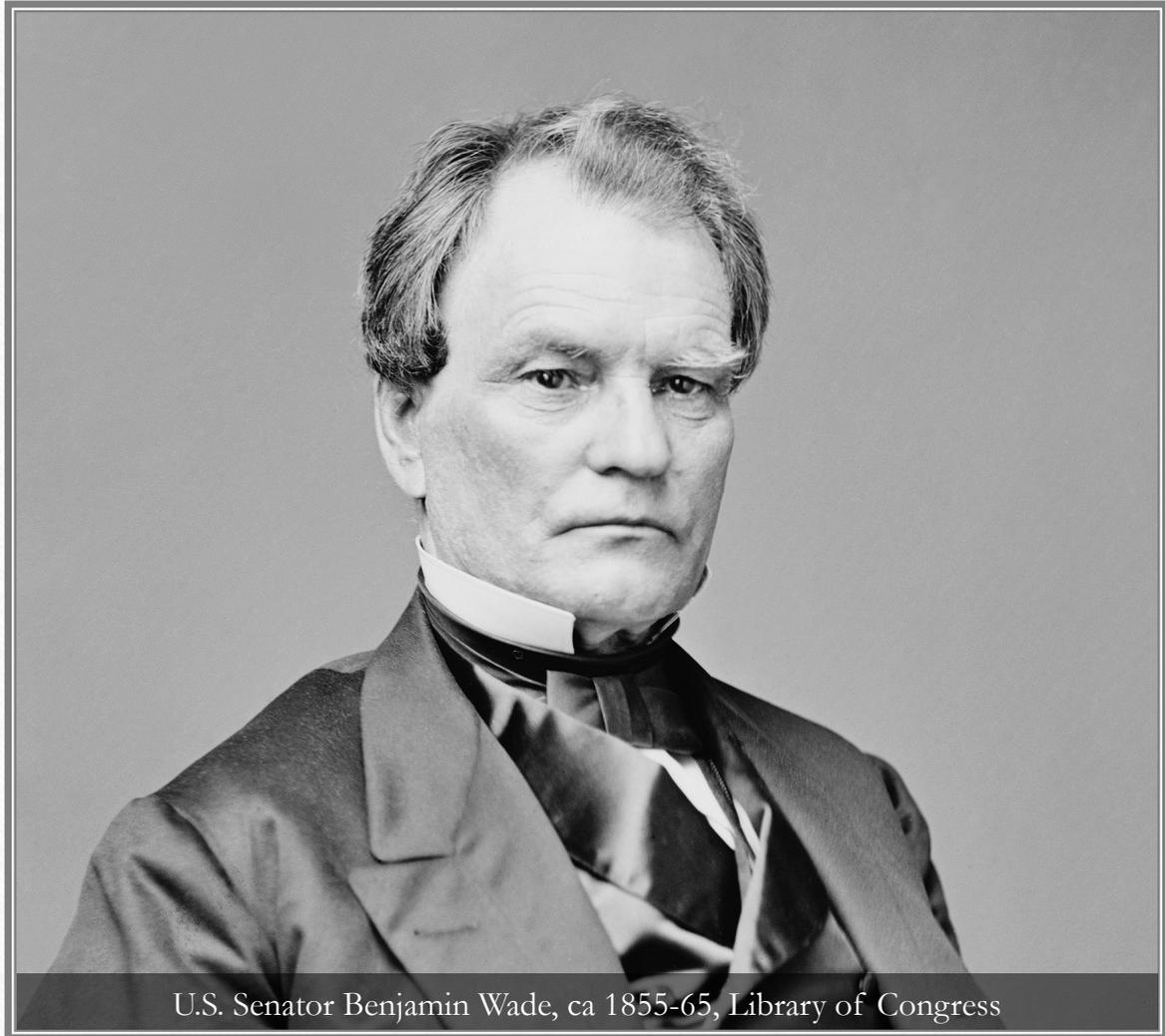
- Thaddeus Stevens and other progressives worked to
 1. Preserve the results of the Union victory and Confederate defeat;
 2. Remake the South—end Confederate nationalism;
 3. Assert greater federal power over states and unite the country, North, South, and West.



U.S. Congressman Thaddeus Stevens, 1860s, Library of Congress

Congressional Reconstruction

- Work by men like Sumner, Stevens, and Benjamin Wade
- Revolutionary transformation of the nation and the status of African Americans.
- This is what Eric Foner calls the Second Founding



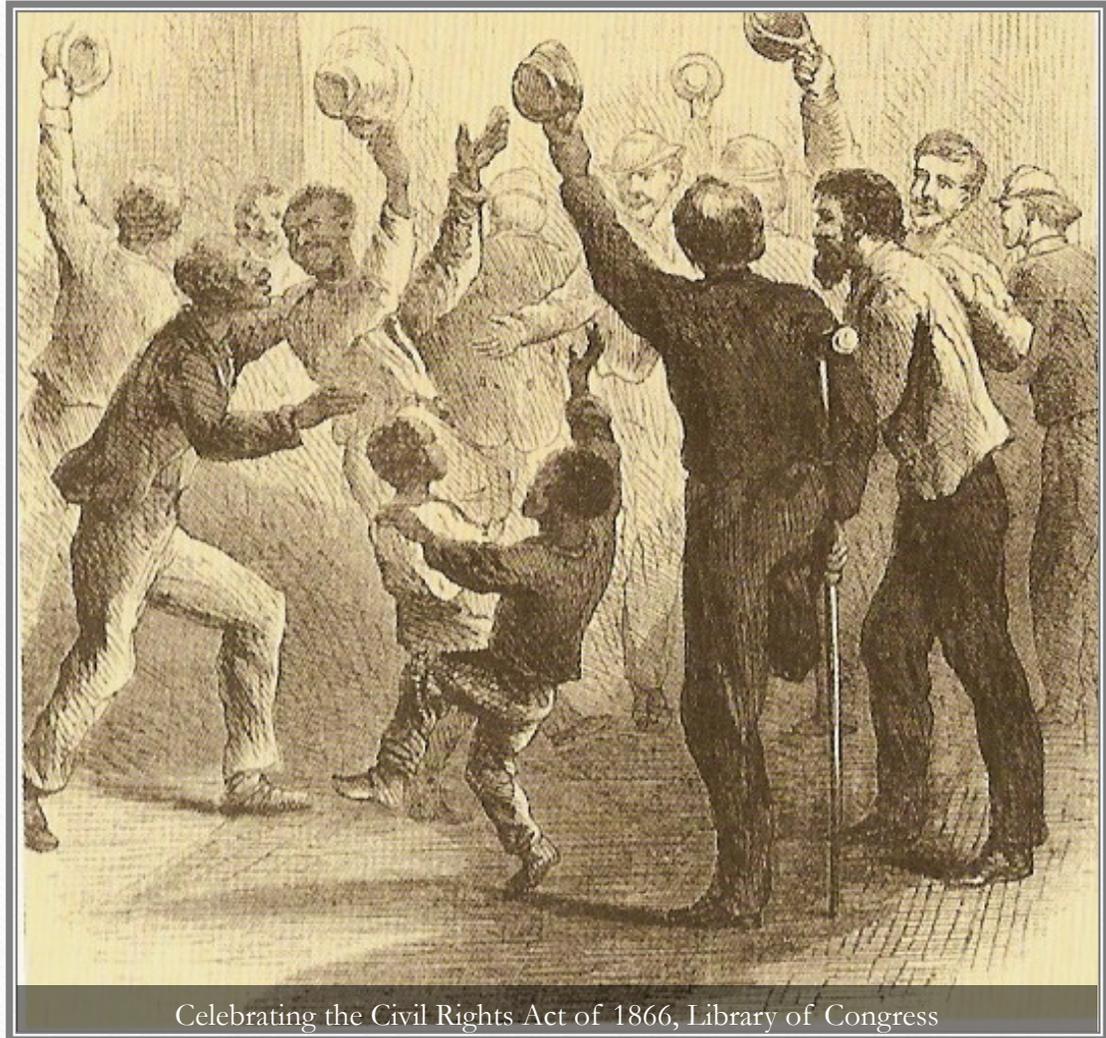
U.S. Senator Benjamin Wade, ca 1855-65, Library of Congress

“The Second Founding”- New Revolution

- Thirteenth Amendment
- Civil Rights Act, 1866
- Fourteenth Amendment
- Fifteenth Amendment
- Civil Rights Act, 1875
- A vast roster of progressive state policies—greater voting rights, equal employment access, schools, public building projects

Civil Rights Act, 1866

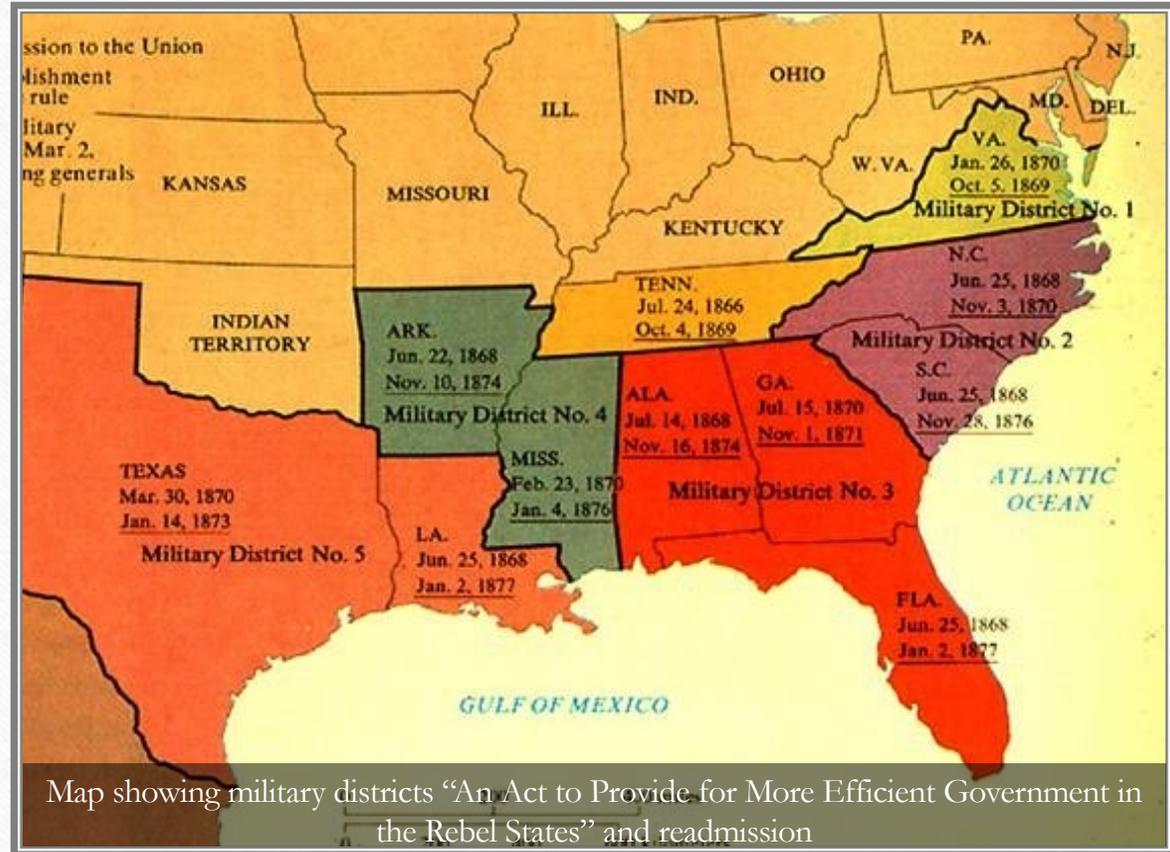
- Not a trifling matter
- Social, civil, legal, criminal justice rights needed to be affirmed by the federal government
- Overturned the Black Codes
- Established birthright citizenship
- Defined federal citizenship and said that all citizens have the same rights and protections, regardless of race.



Celebrating the Civil Rights Act of 1866, Library of Congress

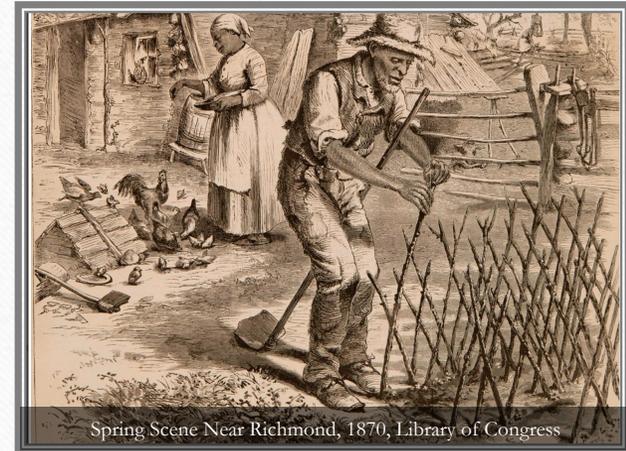
Reconstruction Act, 1867

- Divides most Confederate states into five military districts and placed under military control.
- Commanders responsible for supervising the establishment of new civilian governments and the writing of new constitutions.
- Required ex-Confederate states not yet returned to the Union ratify the Fourteenth Amendment & guarantee male suffrage for readmission.



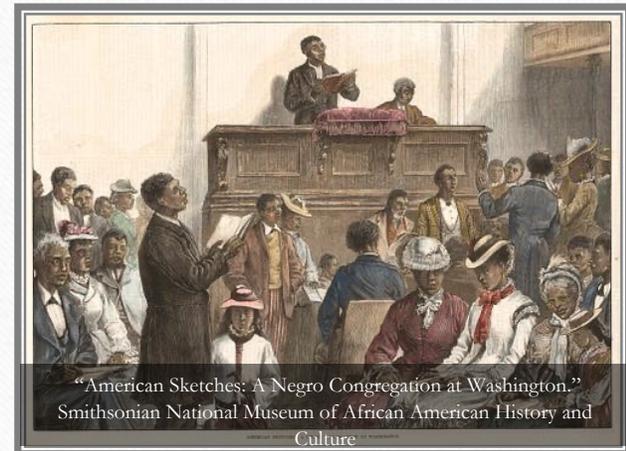
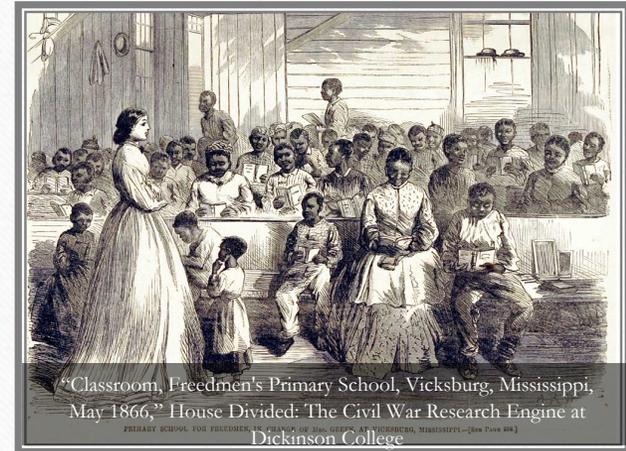
Make a Decent & Fulfilling Living

- Land
- Living wages
- Establish own businesses
- Make Contracts
- Pursue fulfilling employment as farm workers and as teachers, doctors, lawyers, nurses, entrepreneurs



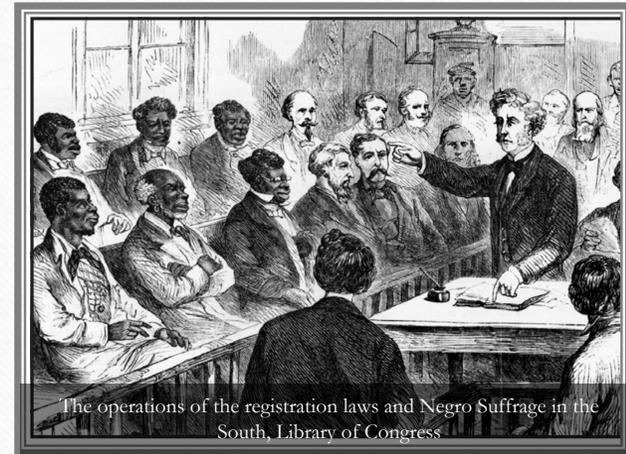
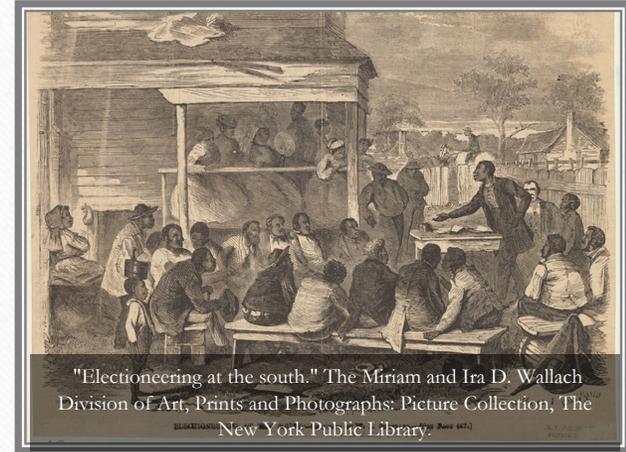
Education & Soul Liberty

- Schools, Knowledge, Trades to earn decent and fulfilling livings
- Free, Independent Religious Life, thousands of churches that become incubators of civil and political movements—many churches will also include schools



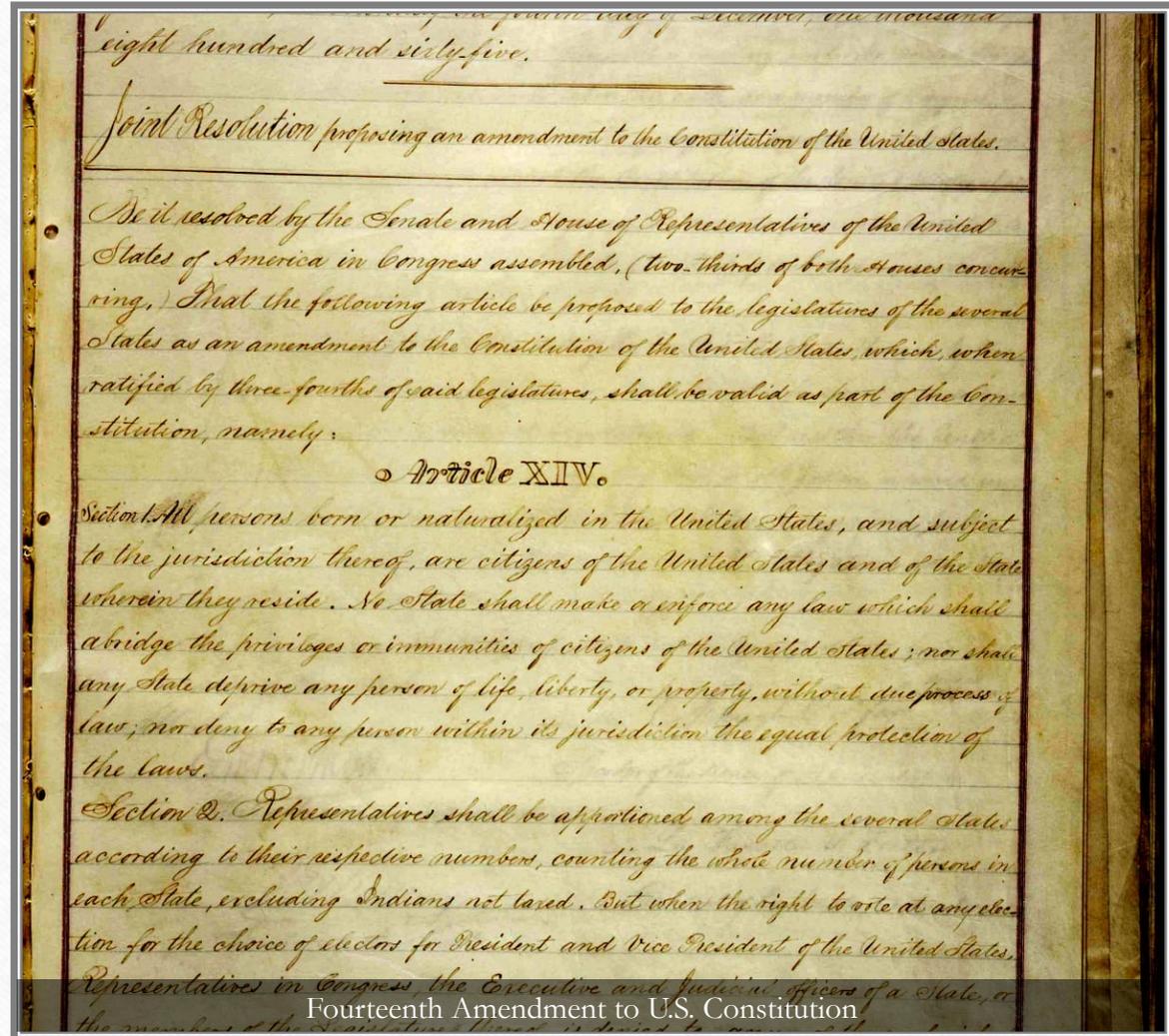
Rights

- Not in the abstract—the needed to be spelled out
- Authority in Governance
- Secure their Freedom and Have Rights Recognized
- Right to Sue, Testify in court—against white people who harmed them
- Serve on Juries, Equal Sentencing



Fourteenth Amendment

All persons born or naturalized in the United States and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the U.S. and of the state wherein they reside.

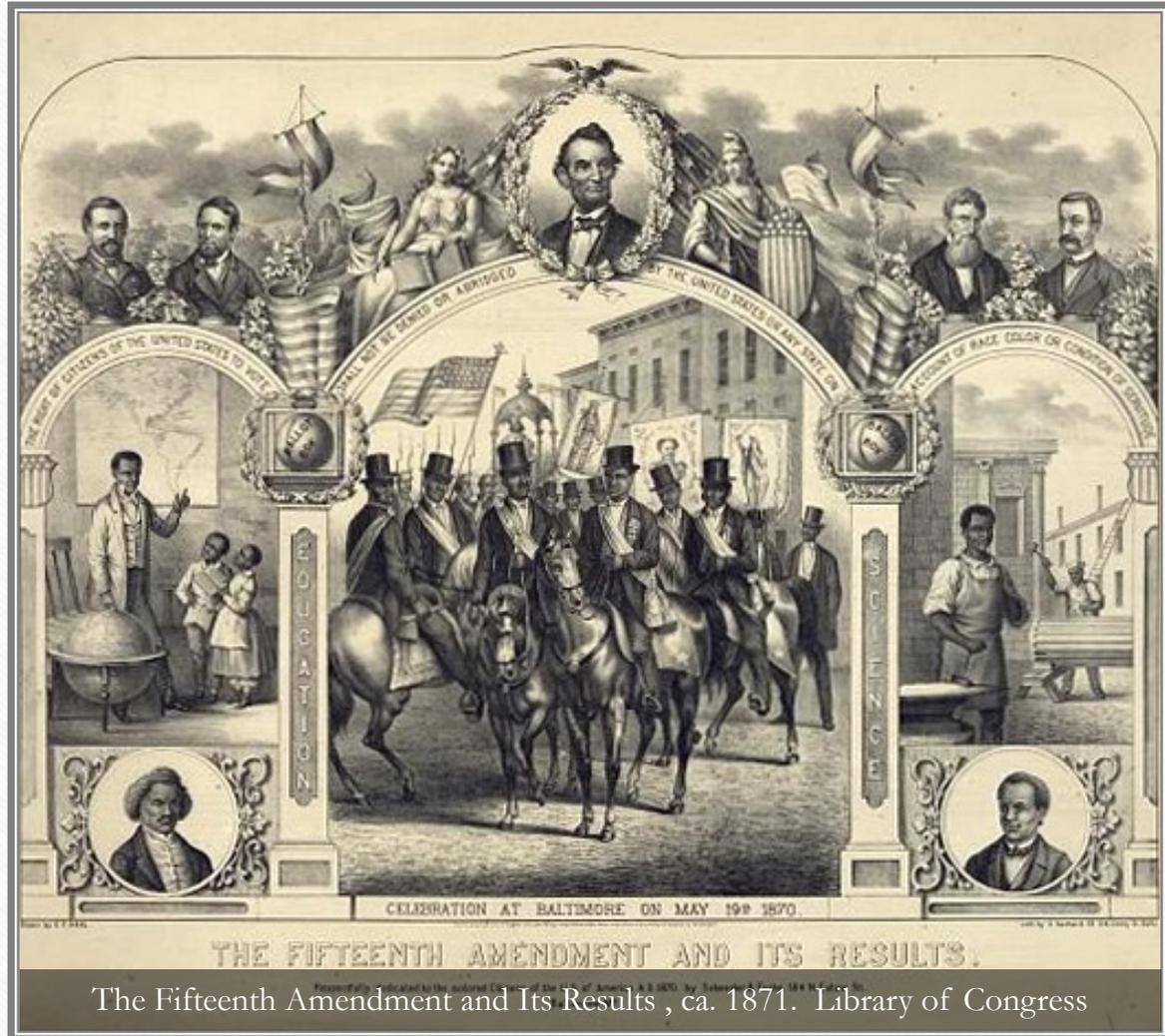


Fourteenth Amendment

- No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States;
- Nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law;
- Nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

Fifteenth Amendment

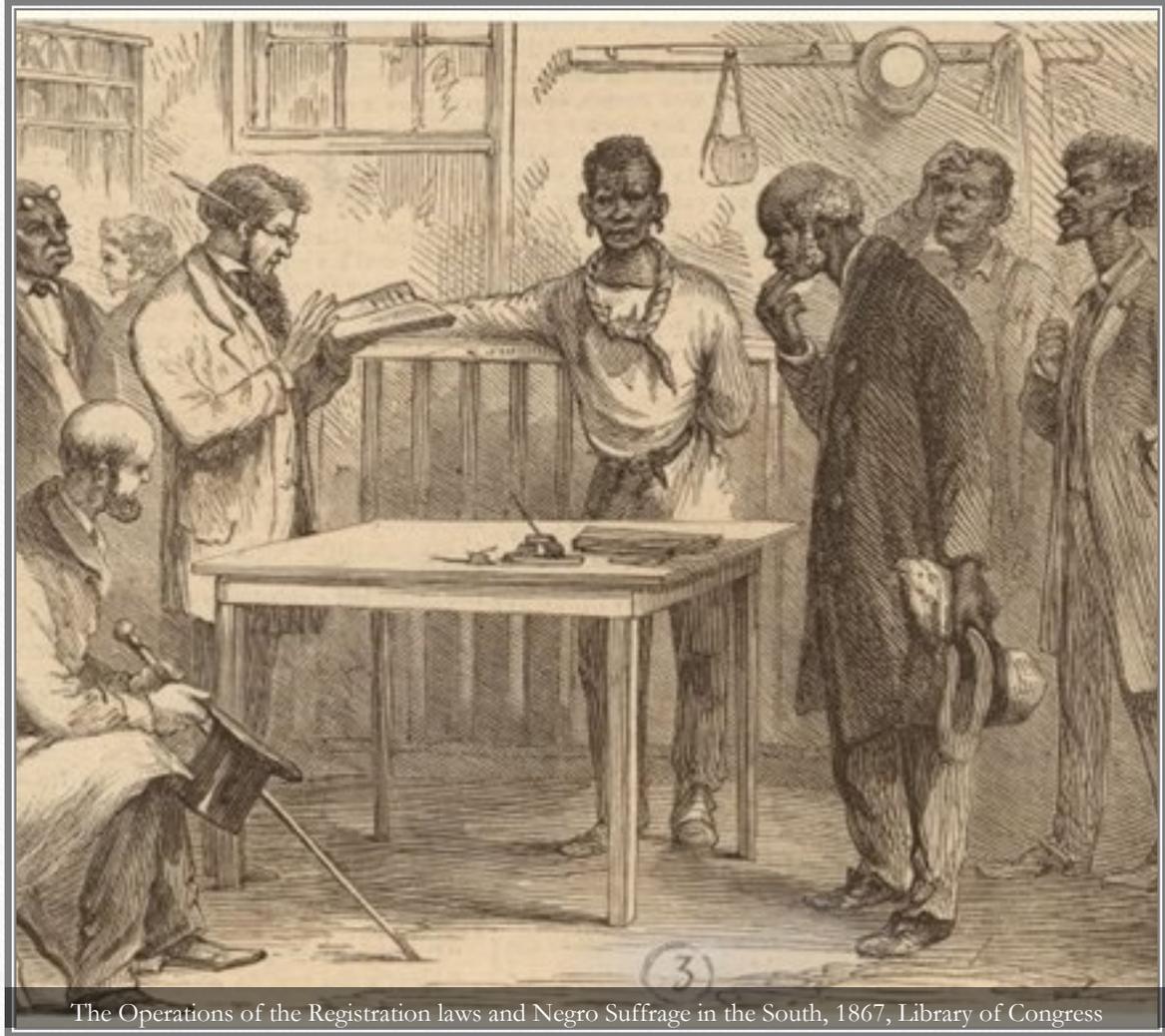
- African Americans wanted the right to vote and serve in office
- Authority in governance gave them a say in local, state, and federal policies shaping their freedom and daily life



The Fifteenth Amendment and Its Results , ca. 1871. Library of Congress

Fifteenth Amendment

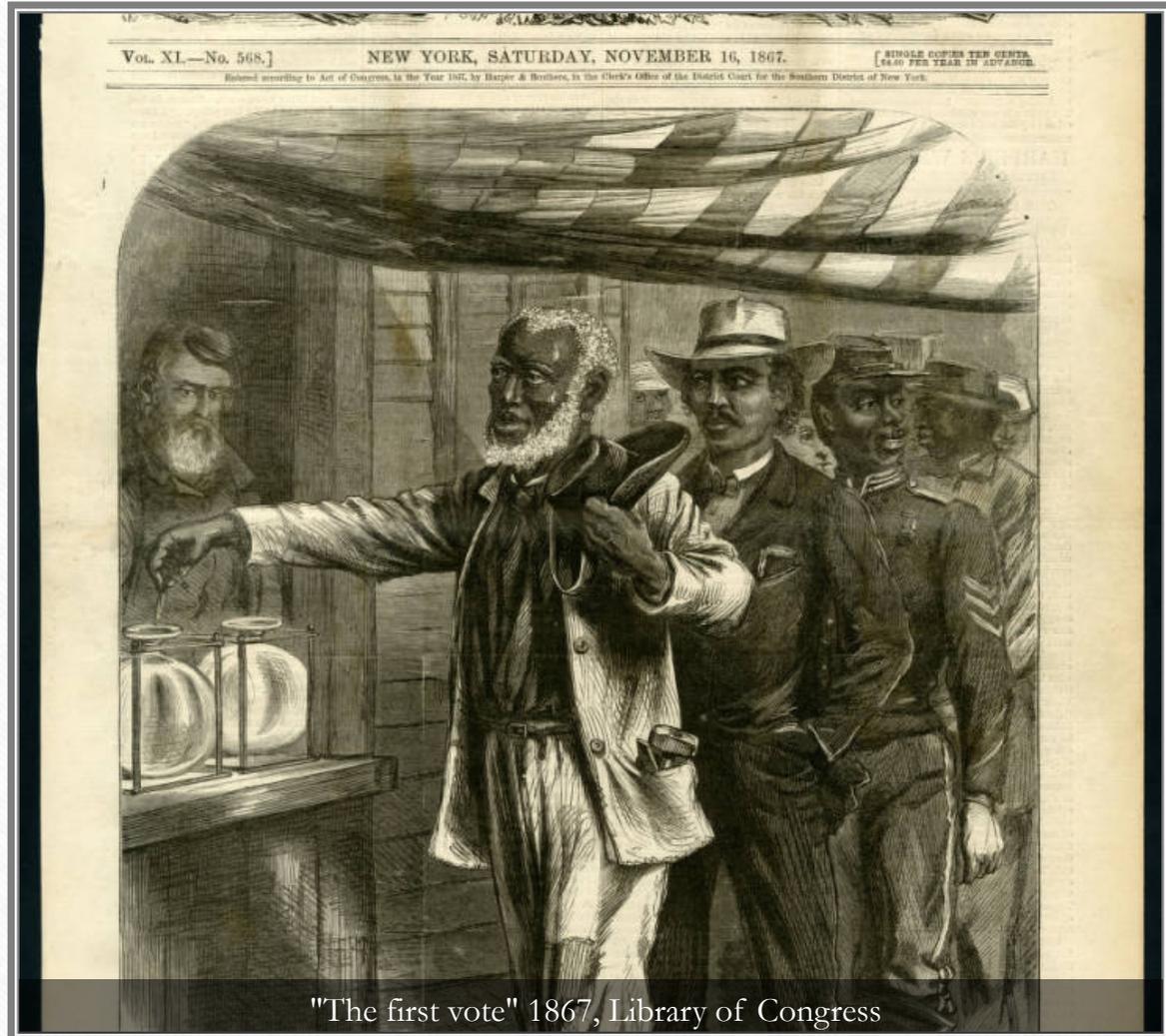
“The right of citizens of the U.S. to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the U.S. or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.”



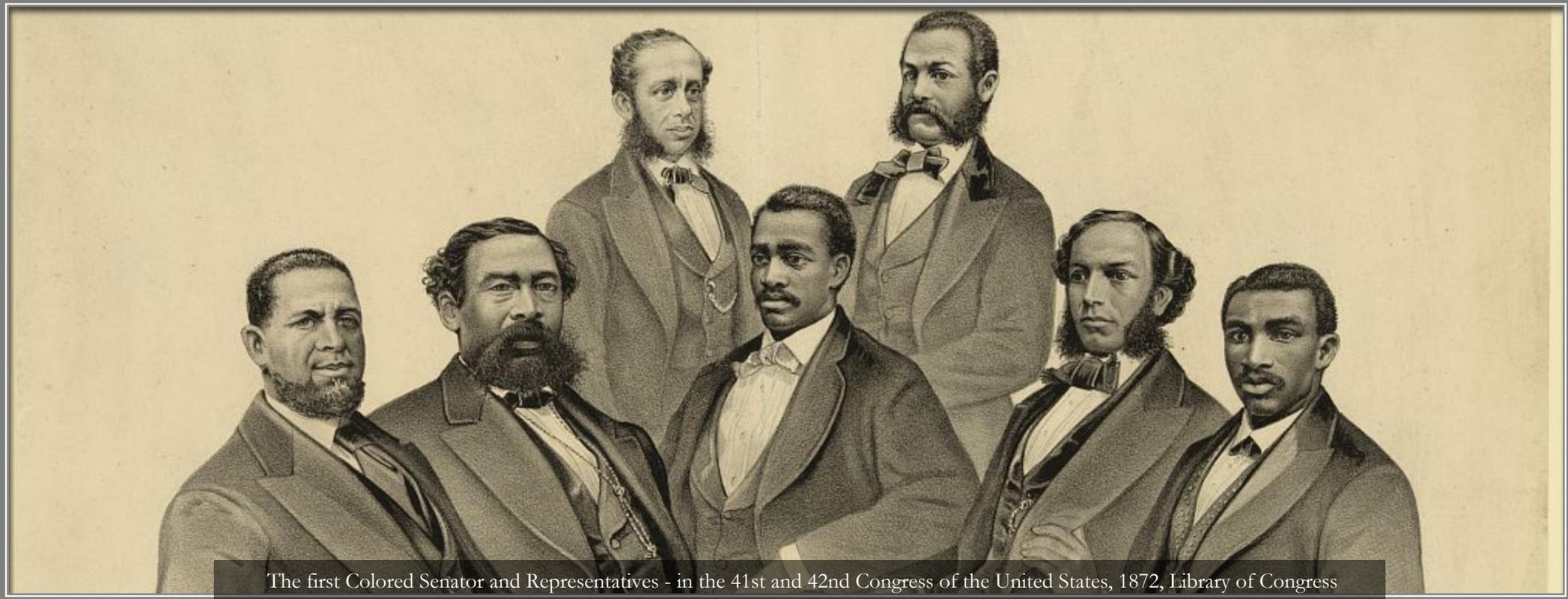
The Operations of the Registration laws and Negro Suffrage in the South, 1867, Library of Congress

Authority in Governance

- With numerical majorities, they send 600 African American men to state legislatures and city and county office
- Implement some of the most progressive and democratic policies to date



"The first vote" 1867, Library of Congress



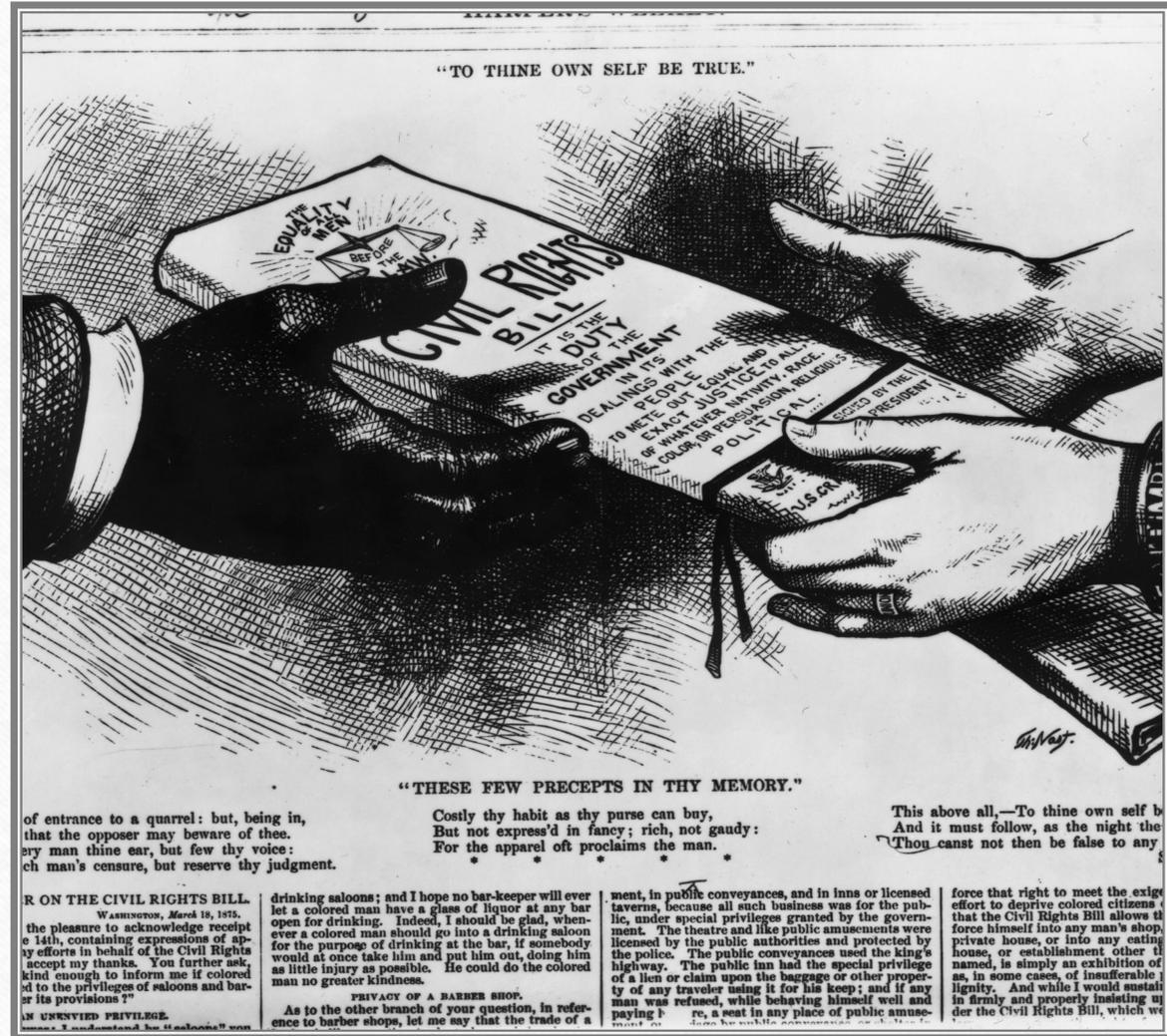
The first Colored Senator and Representatives - in the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States, 1872, Library of Congress

Authority in Governance

They send 16 members to the U.S. Congress

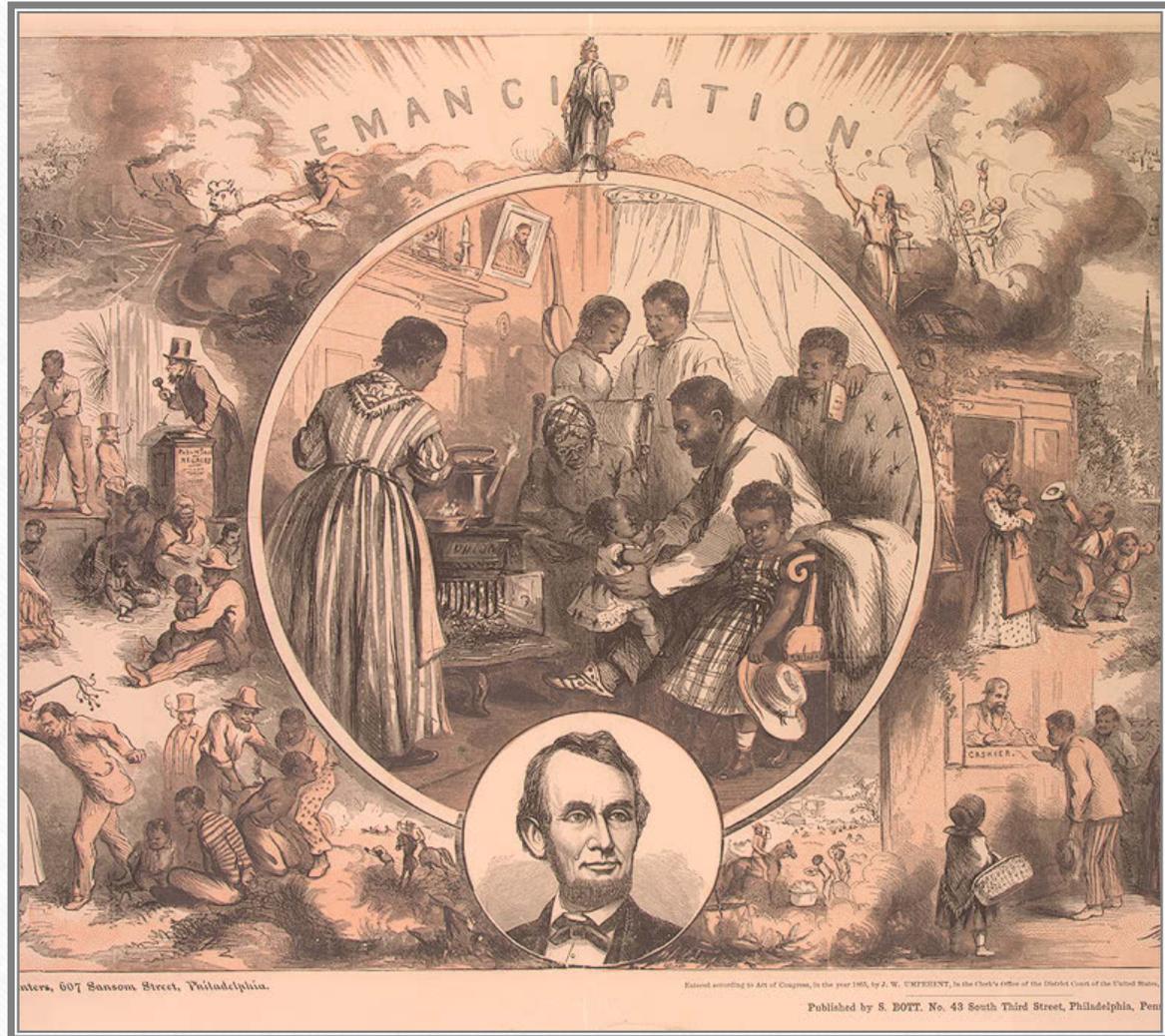
Civil Rights Act, 1875

- Prohibited racial discrimination in places of public accommodations (supported by taxes all Americans paid, or aided by interstate commerce)—schools, parks, theaters, inns, hotels, restaurants, hospitals, cemeteries, streetcars, and trains



With many of their wishes granted, Black Reconstruction begins

- Families reunited
- Land acquired
- Education training future generations
- Thriving churches and businesses
- Lawmakers
- Lack of enforcement will leave enjoyment of rights at risk



Reconstruction's Violent Overthrow

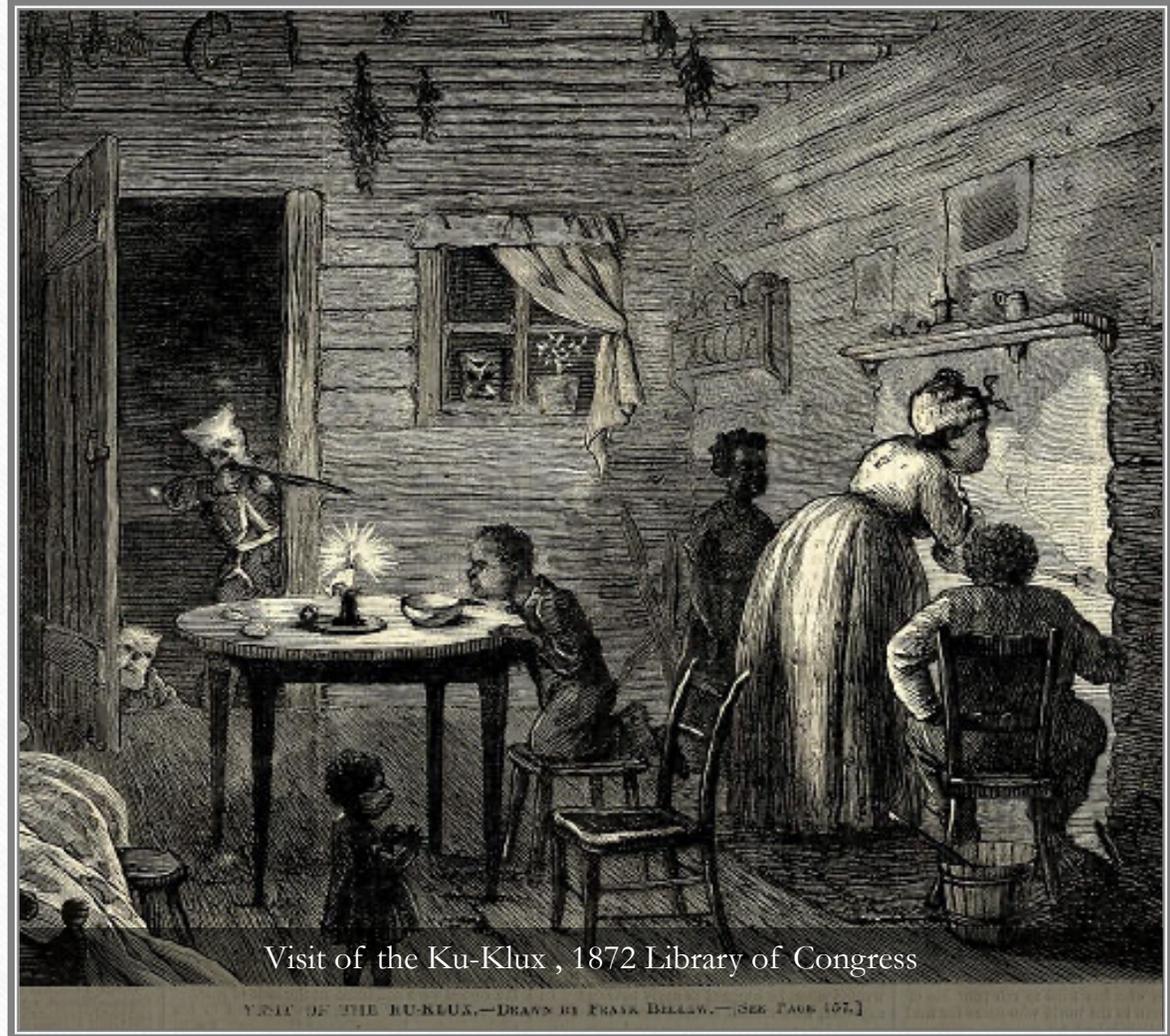
- Narrative of Reconstruction's "failure" belies its actual history of violent overthrow by whites opposed abolition and equal rights
- They waged war on Reconstruction, targeting African Americans and their white allies



The Union as it was. The lost cause, worse than slavery, 1874. Library of Congress

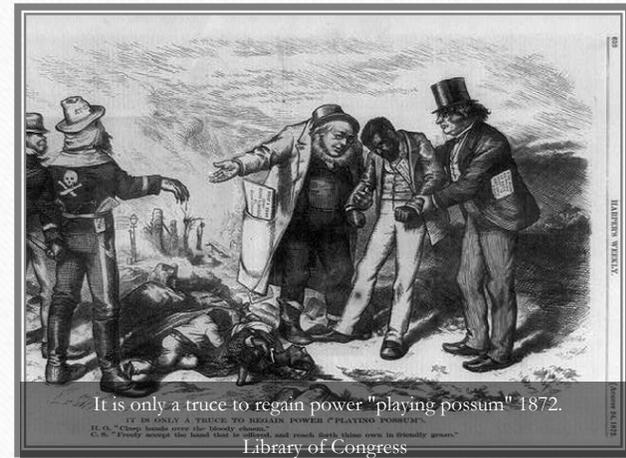
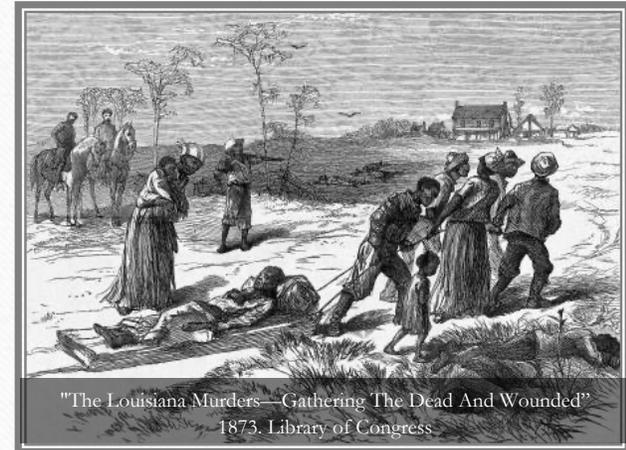
Reconstruction's Violent Overthrow

- White vigilante squads target politicians, voters, ministers, and teachers and their families
- African Americans bore the brunt of it
- Schools, churches, businesses destroyed
- Families driven off land



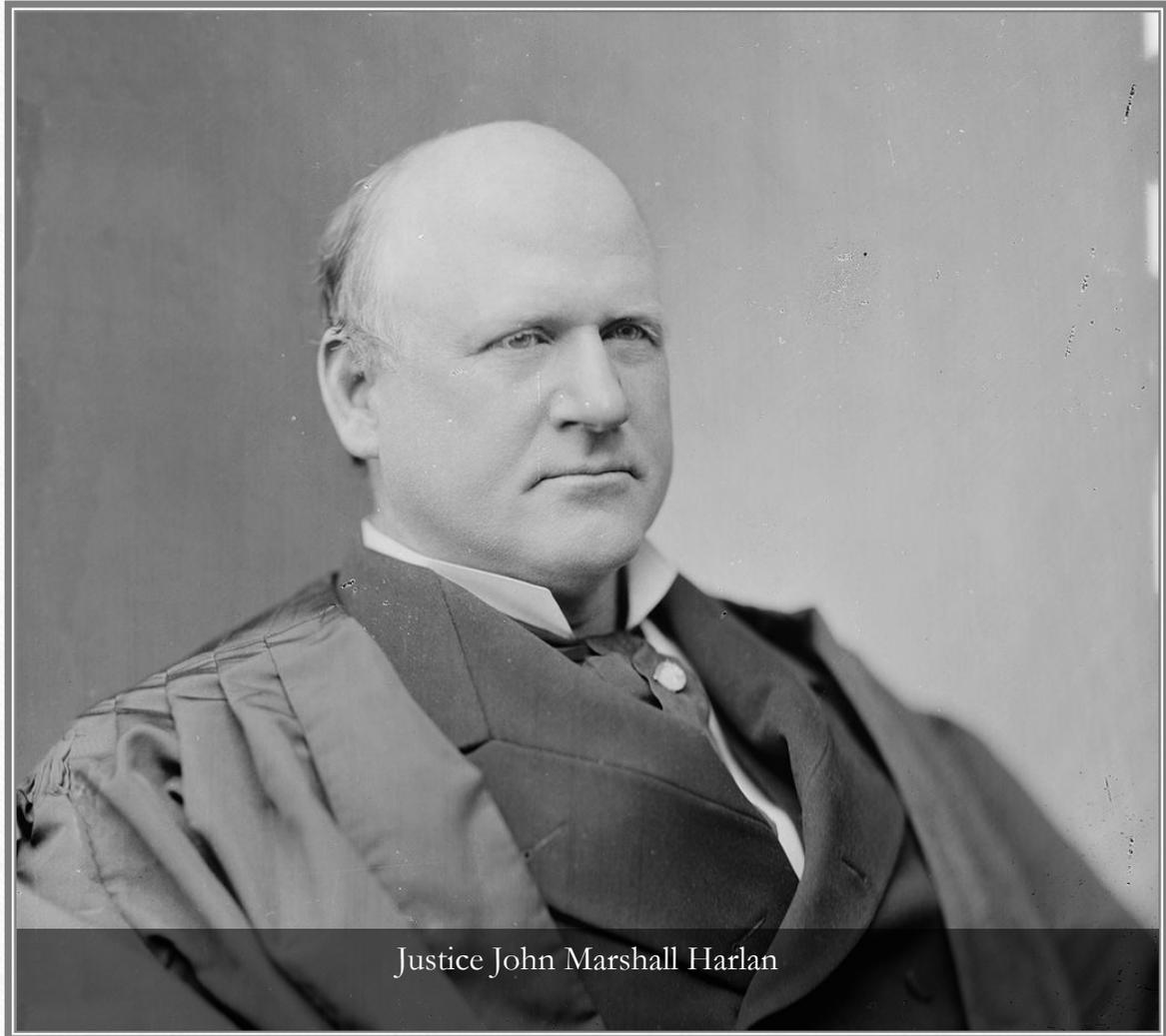
Reconstruction's Violent Overthrow

- Mass killing events--massacres and white mobs rampaging through towns
- Little to no accountability for the killings and other violence
- “Play possum” and live or fight for rights and die
- Assassinations and mass killings enabled ex-Confederates to return to power



The Supreme Court

- The lone holdout would be Justice John Marshall Harlan, who dissented in the 1883 *Civil Rights Cases* decision saying:
“Our Constitution is **color-blind**,” that “in this country there is no superior, dominant ruling class of **citizens**,” and that it is wrong to allow the states to “regulate the enjoyment of **citizens' civil rights** solely on the basis of race.”
- Future Court will affirm Harlan’s arguments



Justice John Marshall Harlan

Centering Texas

- [Texas's Black Codes](#)
- Texas's readmission requirements
- Texans' diverse stance on the Civil Rights Bills and Constitutional Amendments—not just ex-Confederates, but all citizens, not just men, women, too; not just whites [but](#) Blacks, Natives, Latinos/as, not just conservatives but moderates and progressives
- Texas's path to ratifying the Reconstruction Amendments—stakes, debates
- Who attended the 1868-69 constitutional convention? What were the terms of the debate?
- Comparing 1866, 1869, & 1876 Texas constitutions
- Texas public school systems, 1871
- Freedmen's Bureau Records
- The insurgency against Reconstruction in Texas
- The insurgency in Texas memory

Reconstruction Resources

- Library of Congress, including Congressional bills, reports, and investigations
- National Archives
- State Archives and Historical Societies—county and city libraries, too
 - UT's Texas Politics Project—Reconstruction
https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu/archive/html/cons/features/0206_01/slide3.html
- Freedmen and Southern Society Project website and documentary history projects
- Documentary Histories of the Civil War and Reconstruction