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This painting shows a new South rising from the ashes of the Civil War. Although Southern leaders hoped this would be the future of the South, most whites and blacks continued to live in poverty.

## 23.6 Reconstruction Reversed

With Reconstruction over, Southern leaders talked of building a “New South” humming with mills, factories, and cities. Between 1880 and 1900, the number of textile mills in the South grew rapidly. Birmingham, Alabama, became a major iron-making center. Still, most Southerners, black and white, remained trapped in an “Old South” of poverty.

**Losing Ground in Education** During Reconstruction, freedmen had pinned their hopes for a better life on education provided by the South’s first public schools. When Southern Democrats regained control of states, however, they cut spending on education. “Free schools are not a necessity,” explained the governor of Virginia. Schools, he said, “are a luxury . . . to be paid for, like any other luxury, by the people who wish their benefits.”

As public funding dried up, many schools closed. Those that stayed open often charged fees. By the 1880s, only about half of all black children in the South were attending school.

**Losing Voting Rights** Southern Democrats also reversed political gains made by freedmen after the war. Many Southern states passed laws requiring citizens

who wanted to vote to pay a poll tax. The tax was set high enough that voting, like education, became a luxury that many black Southerners could not afford.

Some Southern states also required citizens to pass a literacy test to show they could read before allowing them to vote. These tests were designed so that any African American, regardless of his education, would fail.

In theory, these laws applied equally to blacks and whites and, for that reason, did not violate the Fifteenth Amendment. In practice, however, whites were excused from paying poll taxes or taking literacy tests by a **so-called** “grandfather clause” in the laws. This clause said the taxes and tests did not apply to any man whose father or grandfather could vote on January 1, 1867. Since no blacks could vote on that date, the grandfather clause applied only to whites.

African Americans protested that these laws denied them their constitutional right to vote. The Supreme Court, however, found that the new voting laws did not violate the Fifteenth Amendment because they did not deny anyone the right to vote on the basis of race.

**Drawing a “Color Line”** During Reconstruction, most Southern states had outlawed segregation in public places. When Democrats returned to power, they reversed these laws and drew a “color line”

between blacks and whites in public life. Whites called the new segregation acts **Jim Crow laws**. Jim Crow was a black character in an entertainer's act in the mid-1800s.

Not all white Southerners supported segregation. When a Jim Crow law was proposed in South Carolina, a *Charleston News and Courier* editorial tried to show how unjust it was by taking segregation to ridiculous extremes.

*If there must be Jim Crow cars on railroads, there should be Jim Crow cars on the street railways. Also on all passenger boats . . . There should be Jim Crow waiting saloons [waiting rooms] at all stations, and Jim Crow eating houses . . . There should be Jim Crow sections of the jury box, and a separate Jim Crow . . . witness stand in every court—and a Jim Crow Bible for colored witnesses to kiss.*

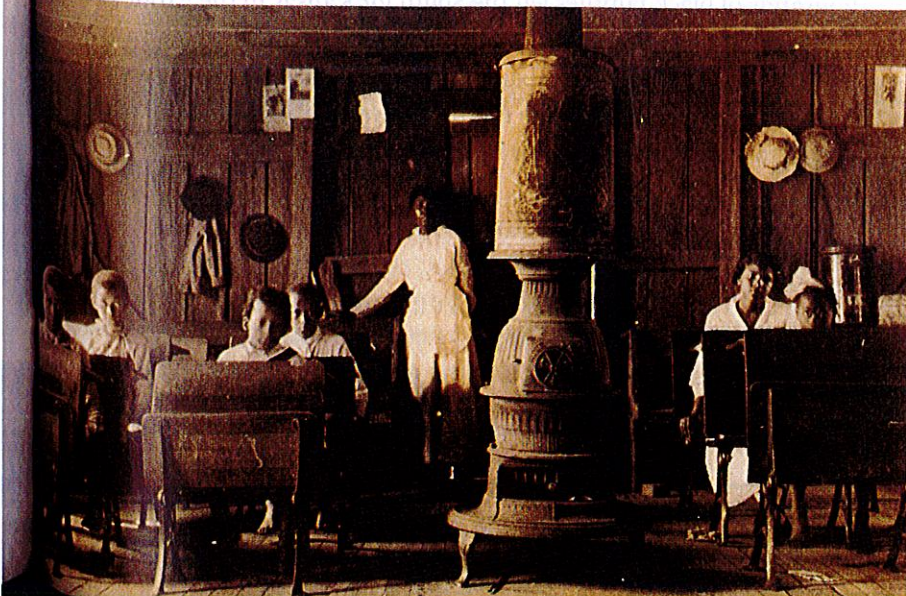
Instead of being a joke, as intended, most of these ridiculous suggestions soon became laws.

**Plessy v. Ferguson** African Americans argued that segregation laws violated the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of equal protection of the laws. Homer Plessy, who was arrested for refusing to obey a Jim Crow law, took his protest all the way to the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court decided his case, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, in 1896. The majority of the Supreme Court justices found that segregation laws did not violate the Fourteenth Amendment as long as the facilities available to both races were roughly equal. Justice John Marshall Harlan, a former slaveholder, disagreed. In his dissenting opinion, he wrote, "Our Constitution is color blind, and neither knows nor **tolerates** classes among citizens."

After the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy*, states passed additional Jim Crow laws. Blacks and whites attended separate schools, played in separate parks, and sat in separate sections in theaters. Despite the Court's decision that these separate facilities must be equal, those set aside for African Americans were almost always **inferior** to facilities labeled "whites only."

**Jim Crow laws** laws enforcing segregation of blacks and whites in the South after the Civil War



For decades, African Americans lived under segregation legalized by the *Plessy* decision. Separate facilities for blacks were rarely equal. This photograph is of a one-room segregated school in Kentucky in 1916.

Two units of African American cavalrymen, the Ninth and Tenth U.S. Cavalry, fought in the Indian wars. Known as "Buffalo Soldiers," the men served loyally but were often mistreated by the white settlers they were protecting. Twenty-three Buffalo Soldiers earned the Medal of Honor for heroism.



### 23.7 Responding to Segregation

African Americans responded to segregation in many ways. The boldest protested openly. Doing so, however, was dangerous. Blacks who spoke out risked being attacked by white mobs. Some were lynched, or murdered, often by hanging, for speaking out against "white rule." During the 1890s, an African American was lynched somewhere in the United States almost every day.

**African American Migration** Thousands of African Americans responded to segregation by leaving the South. A few chose to return to Africa. In 1878, some 200 Southern blacks chartered a ship and sailed to Liberia, a nation in West Africa that had been founded in 1821 for the settlement of freed American slaves.

Many more African Americans migrated to other parts of the United States. Not only were they pushed from the South by racism and poverty, but they were pulled by the lure of better opportunities and more equal treatment. Some sought a new life as wage earners by migrating to cities in the North. There, they competed for jobs with recent immigrants from Europe and often faced racism, if not Southern-style segregation. Others headed to the West, where they found work as cowboys and Indian fighters. Two all-black U.S. Cavalry units known as the Buffalo Soldiers fought on the front lines of the Indian wars. Some blacks found new homes with American Indian nations.

Thousands of black families left the South for Kansas in the Exodus of 1879. The "exodusters," as the migrants were known, faced many hardships on their journey west. Bands of armed whites patrolled roads in Kansas in an effort to drive the migrants away. Still, the exodusters pushed on, saying, "We had rather suffer and be free."

**Self-Help** Most African Americans, however, remained in the South. They worked hard in their families, churches, and communities to improve their lives. While most blacks farmed for a living, a growing number started their own businesses. Between 1865 and 1903, the number of black-owned businesses in the South soared from about 2,000 to 25,000.

Families, churches, and communities also banded together to build schools and colleges for black children. Because of these efforts, literacy among African Americans rose rapidly. When slavery ended in 1865, only 5 percent of African Americans could read. By 1900, more than 50 percent could read and write.

## Chapter Summary

In this chapter, you learned about the period of Reconstruction in the South from 1865 to 1877.

**Presidential Reconstruction** Under President Johnson's Reconstruction plan, every Southern state rejoined the Union after it had written a new constitution, elected a new state government, cancelled its war debts, and ratified the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery.

**Congressional Reconstruction** Congressional Reconstruction began in 1866, when Republican leaders in Congress worked to give freedmen the full rights of citizenship. Congress passed, and the states ratified, the Fourteenth Amendment, which gave citizenship to all people born in the United States and equal protection of the law to all citizens.

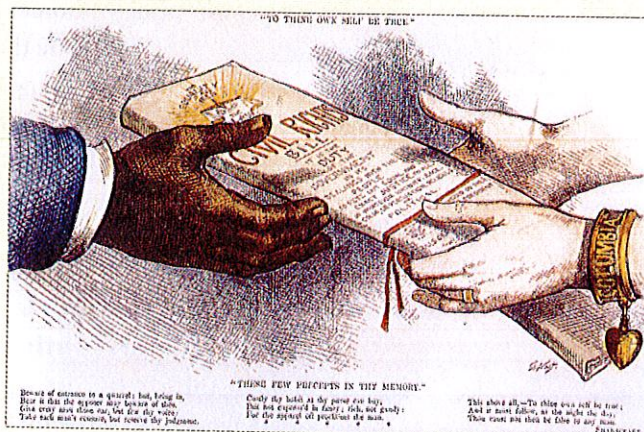
**Southern Reconstruction** Under the Military Reconstruction Act, federal troops returned to the South in 1867 and began registering voters. New Southern voters helped former Union general Ulysses S. Grant become president. In 1869, Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment, which protected the right of African American men to vote. Many blacks were elected to state government offices during this third phase of Reconstruction.

**The End of Reconstruction** Southern whites used legal means as well as violence to keep blacks from voting or taking office. Reconstruction officially ended in 1877, when President Rutherford B. Hayes withdrew all remaining federal troops from the South once he took office after the disputed election of 1876.

**Reconstruction Reversed** After Reconstruction, African Americans lost educational and political gains. Many Southern states closed schools that had been opened to freedmen. They also passed laws designed to keep blacks from voting. Jim Crow laws and the Supreme Court's decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized many forms of discrimination against blacks.

**Responding to Segregation** Many African Americans responded to segregation by leaving the South. Many migrated to other parts of the United States. Those who remained in the South worked hard to improve their lives.

This Thomas Nast cartoon celebrates the Civil Rights Bill of 1875. This bill and other Reconstruction legislation tried to give full citizenship rights to African Americans.



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