

Civil war reconstruction

[History](#), [African American](#)



The period of Reconstruction began immediately after the Civil War and ended in 1877. This era is known for the advancements made in favor of racial equality. These improvements included the fourteenth amendment, "this law guaranteed that federal and state laws would apply equally and unequivocally to both African Americans and whites" (civil-war. ws), and the fifteenth amendment, which granted freedmen to vote. With the end of Reconstruction in 1877, the Republican Party lost control of the southern governments and the Democratic Party took over. This shift in power was supposed to mark the beginning of the "New South" in which the virtues of thrift, industry, and progress would become the model characteristics of the South. Confederates at the time saw Reconstruction as both benefiting and hurting them. They did not want northern culture to be pressured on to their society but they greatly appreciated the help in rebuilding their homes and cities in hope of a better future. Their plans and ideas for the better south looked as if to be perfect at the time but as the government would soon find out they had many flaws. The changes in the South from 1877-1900 reflected traditional attitudes and policies, such as power in the hands of a conservative oligarchy, the maintaining of agriculture over industry as the primary source of economics, and the return of white supremacy, rather than the vision of the New South. With the change in political power from the Republican Party to the Democratic Party in 1877, the South again was back to mainly all white governments which eliminated any political gains African Americans had made during Reconstruction. Democratic Party also marked a return to a powerful, conservative oligarchy, which had been the case before the Civil War. These democrats referred to themselves as the "Redeemers"

but were referred to by many as "Bourbons" because of their aristocratic ways. This ruling class consisted of the former plantation owners and new leaders that were merchants, industrialists, railroad developers, and financiers. Even though they promised to improve economic development, they ended up decreasing spending, lowering taxes, and lessening state services. Many people formed groups and movements in protest of these choices by the "Redeemers," yet all of these movements failed and the "Bourbons" remained in control. Although the return of control to a powerful oligarchy was supposed to help the progress of the "New South", their traditionalist beliefs and stingy economics only brought a return of a government similar to which ran the South in the pre-Civil War era. During this time African Americans were also allowed to play a part in politics if they managed to get around the rules that the anti-equal right whites made to keep blacks out of any political office. Black During reconstruction blacks were also able to participate in the political process. During the conventions held in 1867 and 1868, blacks helped write new laws and repeal black codes. Some blacks were also elected into political office. They held such positions as U. S. Senators, U. S. Representatives, and lieutenant governors.

(afroamhistory) A major goal of the "New South" was to improve the region's industrial economy and make it mirror the North in a way. This would help the South increase its number of textile factories dramatically which brought a significant amount of money in. Since cotton planters had to transport their shipments to northern factories in the past, these new factories helped the southern farmers tremendously. These factories benefited the northern industries better because the southern mills did not dye the cotton there for

they could not sell it so it had to be shipped to northern factories where it was died and then sold with most of the profit going to the North. Other industries that experienced an increase in production after Reconstruction were the tobacco-processing industry, the iron and steel industry that boomed out of Birmingham, Alabama, and the railroad companies that helped the South to double the amount of track from 1880-1890. Despite these industrial advancements, the South would never reach the impact industrialization had on the Northern economy. The railroad industry also had negative effects on the economy do to corruption when wealthy railroad companies would bribe Senators for the governments bid on laying the track. Also, in those areas of improvement, such as textiles and railroads, a large amount of the financial resources came from the North. The South's major economic source was still agriculture and white farmers made out very well due to tenant farming and share croppers. Tenant farmers, including debt peonage and the crop-lien system, made up seventy percent of the Southern planters by 1900. Many African Americans who had just been freed from slavery made up this percentage. They now were apart of a binding economic slavery. Although the South had improved its industry, it had not accumulated its goal of becoming an industrial region like the North. Although the South made many attempts at improving its economy they failed many times and did not make much of an improvement. White supremacy had been apart of the South since the colonization of America and this idea had not changed over the period of Reconstruction. The steps toward racial equality that African Americans had received in the fourteenth and fifteenth amendments were removed of all their importance after the

Supreme Court made a couple rulings on the two amendments. The Supreme Court ruled that the fourteenth amendment only forbid state governments from discrimination and not private organizations and individuals. Thus, separate seating sections for each race in railroad cars were made legal by the court case Plessey v. Ferguson, 1896, and segregated schools were allowed by the court case Cumming vs. County Board of Education, 1899 (pinzler). On the fifteenth amendment, the Supreme Court allowed the use of a poll tax and a literacy test, the two of which combined to allow few African Americans to vote; by 1900, the black vote had lowered by sixty-two percent Jim Crow laws, laws that segregated blacks from whites and allowed for white supremacy, were quite common in every part of Southern society. Eighty percent of the total national lynchings occurred in the south, in order to intimidate and frighten African Americans into having no choice but permit for white supremacy. The South's traditional attitude of racial inequality was once again appearing and becoming a huge part of Southern life. Many "moderate" political activists "saw success in achieving the goals by assurances that the former Confederates had totally renounced secession and completely abolished slavery". (wikipedia) Despite the call for a "New South" in which the southern society would become more like northern life, traditional attitudes and policies were becoming more prevalent in changes in the South from 1877-1900. The return of a powerful conservative oligarchy, the maintaining of agriculture over industry as the primary source of economics, and the return of white supremacy were all ways that the New South was returning life back to the pre-Reconstruction time period. The results of these changes were very apparent as many of the ideas and laws

passed that affected southern society from 1877-1900 would continue to shape the South for nearly a century later. Many of the same views of the racist southerners have managed to survive to this day. Examples of this are in every hate crime through out the country. Better examples can be seen in the sixties with a more modern day equal rights movement with Martin Luther King Jr. The United States of America, in its Constitution and Declaration of Independence, guaranteed a safe place for all people to live out there life in pursuit of happiness. These promises have been compromised how ever by people throughout history. Maybe one day people will be able to look pass the skin color of a man and continue and finish the Reconstruction of the Union. Works Cited [http://afroamhistory. about. com/cs/reconstruction/a/reconstruction. htm](http://afroamhistory.about.com/cs/reconstruction/a/reconstruction.htm) March 8, 2006 [http://www. civil- war. ws/reconstruction/](http://www.civil-war.ws/reconstruction/) March 7, 2006 [http://www. pinzler. com/ushistory/cwtimeline. html](http://www.pinzler.com/ushistory/cwtimeline.html) March 10, 2006 [http://en. wikipedia. org/wiki/Reconstruction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reconstruction) March 10, 2006