

Reconstruction Time Line with Notes

Compiled by Marilyn Mitchell, June 2020 (with edits in October by Karen Wamstad)

1861-1865	Civil War
1861-1865	Abraham Lincoln, President, Republican (Union Party) Elected 1860, reelected 1865
1862	Lincoln considers a reconstruction plan including voting rights for “some” Black Americans
1863	Emancipation Proclamation: An executive order that freed over 3.5 million slaves in Confederate states. 180,000 freed slaves join the Union forces
Video #1	
1863-1877	Reconstruction (considered to have begun in 1865 at the end of the war)
April 9, 1865	Lee surrenders to Grant at Appomattox Court House
April 14, 1865	Lincoln assassinated
1865-1869	Andrew Johnson, President, Democrat (Union Party); he was a Southerner but not a member or friend of the plantation elite nor a friend of the Black population
May -Dec 1865	Johnsonian Reconstruction. While Congress is not in session Johnson attempts to return South to pre-war status with confederate military officers and plantation owners in leadership positions and the reinstatement of servitude labor
May 1865	Freedman’s Bureau created to oversee the transition of Southerners from slavery to freedom, i.e., to protect former slaves and oversee land redistribution
June 19, 1865	Juneteenth. News of Emancipation Proclamation reaches Galveston Texas.
Oct 1865	Parts of SC, GA and FL set aside for freedmen (40 acres and a mule)
Dec 1865	Thirteenth Amendment ratified abolishing slavery
1865	Black Codes (restrictive laws designed to limit the freedom of African Americans and ensure their availability as a cheap labor force) passed in Southern states.
1866	Ku Klux Klan organizes. Black Codes maintained status of Blacks in subordination. Johnson restored land to the confederate owners. Sharecropping becomes a way of life.
1866	Radical Republicans passed the Civil Rights Act of 1866. Provided birthright citizenship to all born in the US when Congress is back in session. Democrats are denied entry. Johnson vetoes it
Jul 1868	Fourteenth Amendment ratified: guarantees citizenship and equal protection of the laws, repudiates Dred Scott decision, limits states’ rights
1869-1877	Ulysses S Grant, Republican was barely elected 1868; motto “let us have peace”; reelected 1873
Video #2	
Feb 1870	Fifteenth Amendment ratified: guarantees the right to vote to all citizens
1870	Republicans dominate in the South with expectation of blacks voting. Creation of Department of Justice in the executive branch to enforce federal laws and ensure the fair and impartial administration of justice.
1871	Enforcement Act of 1871 passed (also known as the Ku Klux Klan Act) to enforce the provisions of the 14 th amendment and to make state officials liable in federal court for depriving anyone of their civil rights or the equal protection of the laws. Outlawed KKK tactics
1872	Credit Mobilier scandal, waning support for reconstruction in the North, split developing within Republican Party
1873	Panic of 1873. Economic failures impacted both the North and the South Increasing violence with KKK and use of racist cartoons
1874	Congressional election. Democrats gain majority in the House
1875	Civil Rights Act of 1875. Authorized Federal action in enforcing first two Enforcement Acts
1876	US v Cruickshank ruled that Bill of Rights did not apply to private actors or to state governments despite the adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment. Blacks lost their protections

- 1876 Republican Party is “the party of large financiers and captains of industry”
 1876 Election of Rutherford B Hayes v. Samuel Tilden. Both are pledged to end reconstruction. Contested election. Popular vote won by Hayes, and Electoral College won by Tilden.
- 1877 **Deal proctored by Pres Grant gives presidency to Hayes and guarantees that the South can run its own affairs. Reconstruction is essentially over**

Video #3

- 1879- Stay or leave? Exodus of many Blacks to Kansas and beyond for promise of land and freedom.
 1880-1889 Twilight years between Reconstruction laws and Jim Crow laws (laws and statutes that treated Blacks different from Whites, effectively mandating segregation). Blacks can still vote, hold office and have equal access to accommodations. But violence and lynching increasingly prevail.
- 1880s- Sharecropping leaves freed slaves increasing impoverished
 1880s- **Convict Leasing**, a new form of slavery, provides labor to planters and corporation making cotton “king”
- 1880s- **Vigilante violence**, lynching, expand the dominance of White supremacy
 1880s- **Scientific racism**. Presumed racial inferiority, race-wide characterization are all tools of Jim Crow
- April 15, 1883 **Civil Rights Cases of 1883**. The Supreme Court ruled the Civil Rights Act of 1875 to be unconstitutional and thus spurred Jim Crow laws
- 1886 **“The New South” by Henry Grady** published to attract Northern investment by promising a modern economy and solution of the “Negro problem”
- 1887- Madison Park and Mound Bayou experiments. Move to “safe spaces’ self-segregation, all Black towns
- 1890 **Reconstruction has been totally overthrown**. Democratic Party is in control of every state in the South except North Carolina
- 1892 Populist Party convention. Movement to ally along class lines, poor Whites and poor Blacks. Efforts in the South stymied by the Democrats
- 1893 Chicago World’s Fair. Afro Americans excluded. Given one day with watermelon stands
 Sept 10,1894 United Daughters of the Confederacy established. Took control of Civil War memory lifting it up from defeat. Interest in honoring southern ancestors and ensuring their version of Civil War history is taught in southern textbooks.
- 1896 **Plessy v Ferguson** upheld the constitutionality of racial segregation under the “separate but equal” doctrine

Video #4

- Nov 28,1898 Wilmington, NC riots force Black leaders out of office. Violent rampage of killings
 1901 **Nadir of US race relations**. One Black congressman remains in the House. White control of the South promulgates Ideological justification of White Supremacy. Propaganda was successful. No reconciliation between North and South.
- 1905 **Niagara Movement**, a black civil rights organization founded by a group of civil rights activists, many of whom were among the vanguard of African-American lawyers in the United States, led by W.E.B Du Bois and William Monroe Trotter
- 1909 **National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) founded**. First concern was lynching and the Springfield Ill riots of 1908
- 1910 The Crisis, the official magazine of the NAACP founded in 1910 by W.E.B Du Bois (editor)
- 1915 **Birth of a Nation (movie)**. Monumentally racist history of the Civil War and the “cultural apex of Southern redemption.”
- 1915 **Rebirth of the Ku Klux Klan**. Burning cross added