

# Dr. Toer's *Amazing Magic Lantern Show*



## **Viewer's Guide to the 30-minute documentary by the American Social History Project**

In the years following the Civil War, a company of players travels the South performing for audiences of African Americans recently freed from slavery. Dr. J. W. Toer's show presents the many meanings of freedom and the ways African Americans struggled to realize the promise of Emancipation in the face of growing violence and repression.

**Visit the ASHP website for more information:  
[www.ashp.cuny.edu](http://www.ashp.cuny.edu)**

# WHO WAS DR. TOER?

At the end of the Civil War, a freed slave and Baptist minister named J.W. Toer traveled the South holding public meetings of men and women recently freed from slavery. Historical documents show that these meetings featured a “magic lantern show” entitled “The Progress of Reconstruction” which illustrated the enormous changes then taking place in the South.

Dr. Toer’s journey took place in the Reconstruction years, 1865-1877, when Americans grappled with the effects of the Civil War and Emancipation. Four million black men and women made the enormous leap from slavery to freedom and citizenship. With slavery dead, the social and economic foundations of southern society had to be rebuilt. It was potentially a revolutionary moment, full of fear and promise. Its outcome would shape the lives of black Americans—indeed, the lives of all Americans—for generations to come.

Dr. Toer’s *Amazing Magic Lantern Show* creates characters for Dr. Toer’s touring company—Noah Brave, Marly Green, and the contentious Mr. Jones—who help us to imagine what his show might have been like. And it provides a unique look at the Civil War and Reconstruction from the point of view of the freed slaves.



**Black Civil War Regimetal seal.**

A rare regimetal seal from an African-American unit in the Union Army. The 3rd United States Colored Infantry Regiment was organized outside of Philadelphia in August 1863 and was involved in the capture of Confederate batteries on Morris Island, South Carolina.

United States Army Military History Institute

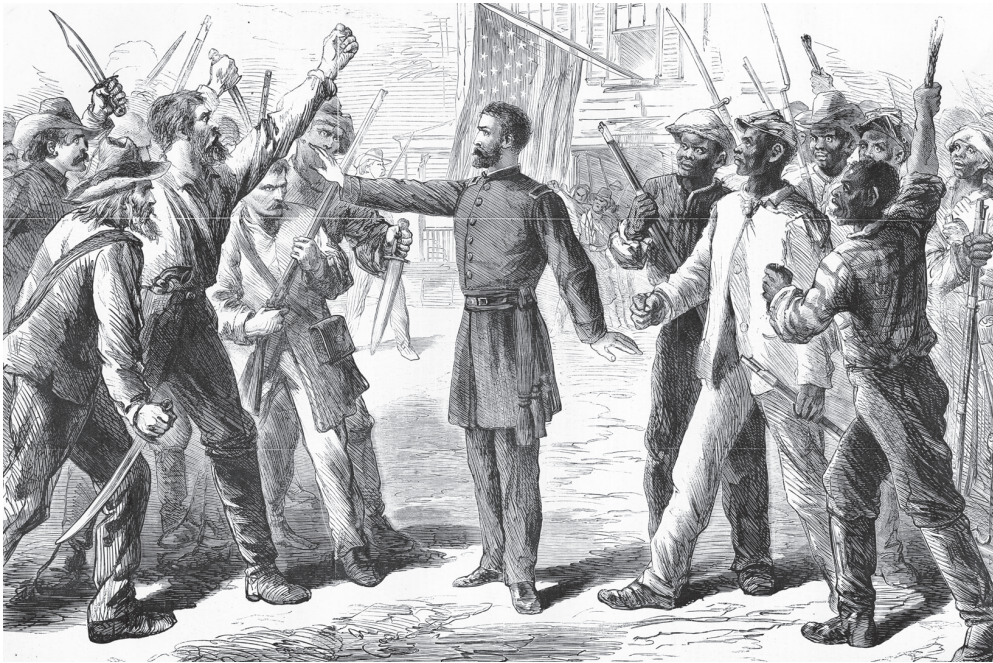


**Photo of Freed Slaves.**

The man in the left foreground, wearing a Union Army uniform, may have been one of their liberators.

United States Army Military History Institute

# WHO MAKES HISTORY?



**“The Freedmen’s Bureau.”**

In this cartoon, a valiant officer of the Freedman’s Bureau is depicted as the only force capable of preventing violence between unruly mobs of white Southerners and former slaves.

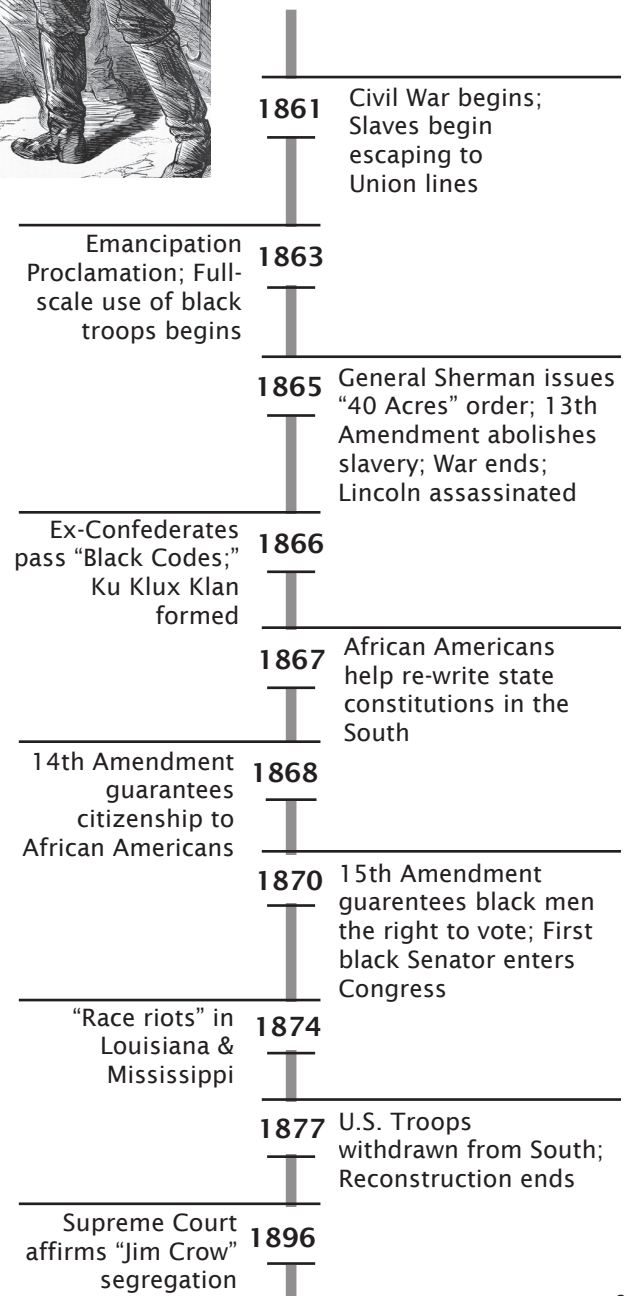
A.R. Waid, *Harper’s Weekly*, July 25, 1868

**W**hen most people say “History,” they think of the deeds of important men, such as presidents and generals, and the dates of big battles. But history is also the story of “ordinary” men and women, such as the freed slaves—the way they lived, worked, and helped shape American society.

For many years, historians saw Reconstruction as the story of defeated gallant southerners plagued by Yankee “carpetbaggers” who punished the South and enriched themselves. Then, in the 1960s, historians began to change their views. In the new, “revisionist” texts, the Ku Klux Klan and other supporters of white supremacy were now the villains, and Yankee Republicans were the heroes of Reconstruction.

Neither traditionalists nor revisionists paid much attention to the actions of the freed slaves. In the old view, Freed slaves were seen as ignorant, child-like creatures led into corruption and violence by the carpetbaggers. In the revised approach they were seen as innocent, passive victims of southern white injustice.

Now historians are asking new questions, which reveal that freed slaves played a more active part in Reconstruction. Based on this new scholarship, *Dr. Toer’s Amazing Magic Lantern Show* can help us see the ways black men and women struggled to overcome the legacy of slavery and create independent lives for themselves—and how, in doing so, they affected the course of American history.



# THE SECOND AMERICAN REVOLUTION



## Refugees.

A Virginia slave family enters the Union camp near Hanover Town, Virginia, in this depiction from *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*. Throughout the war, a steady stream of black refugees sought sanctuary behind Union lines as they fled southern plantations and owners.

Edwin Forbes, May 29, 1864. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

**The Civil War, the bloodiest war in American history, did not begin as a war to end slavery. The North went to war in 1861 only to limit slavery's expansion and preserve the Union.**

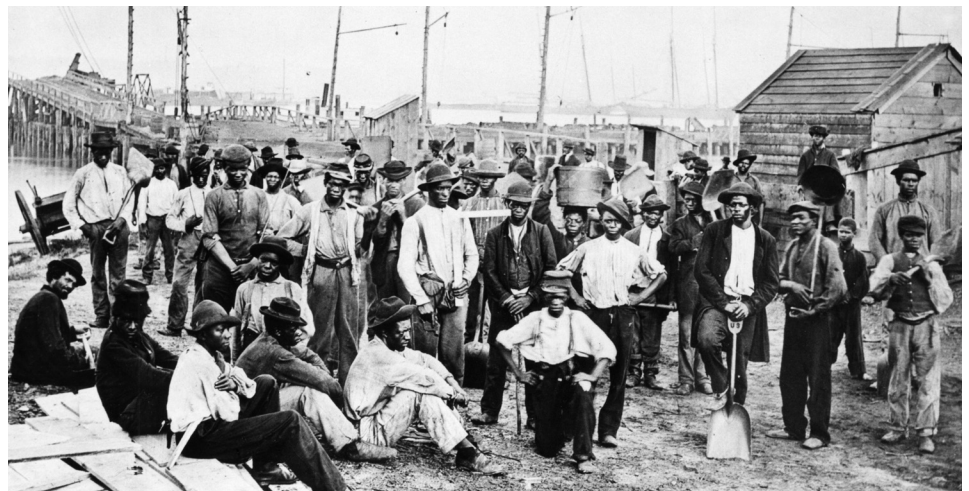
Northerners wanted to keep slavery out of the West, to reserve new land for the use of free white farmers and the free labor system. But northern attempts to limit slavery led southern states to secede from the Union. Soon the nation was at war.

Nevertheless, the war opened new roads to freedom. As early as mid-1861, slaves began running away from plantations to find the Union Army. While some Union officers returned runaways to their masters, others declared them free and requested permission to use them as soldiers and laborers. In 1862, Congress responded with laws forbidding the Army to return runaways. Finally, in January

1863, President Lincoln enacted the Emancipation Proclamation, which officially gave the war a revolutionary purpose: the destruction of slavery.

The Proclamation cut off the Confederacy from possible allies, such as Great Britain. It also struck at the economic system of the South. After the Proclamation, more slaves dropped their tools and fled to the Union lines. The runaways helped cripple the cotton economy and weaken the Confederate war effort.

As the Confederates weakened, the Union war effort grew stronger. Hundreds of thousands of ex-slaves built fortifications, manned supply lines, staffed hospitals, and worked as cooks and laundresses in Union Army camps. Soon black regiments were formed and black men marched into battle against their former owners.



## Put to Work.

U.S. Navy dockworkers at a Union-held southern port. As former slaves fled into Union-controlled areas, they were frequently put to work as laborers, supply line workers, cooks and hospital staff.

United States Army Military History Institute

# MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY

*"There are now in the service of the United States near 200,000 able-bodied colored men. . . Abandon all the posts now garrisoned by black men; take 200,000 men from our side and put them in the battlefield or the cornfield against us, and we would be compelled to abandon the war in three weeks..."*

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 1864

## "Marching On."

The Fifty-fifth Massachusetts regiment marches into Charleston, South Carolina, February, 1865.

*Harper's Weekly*, March 18, 1865.  
American Social History Project



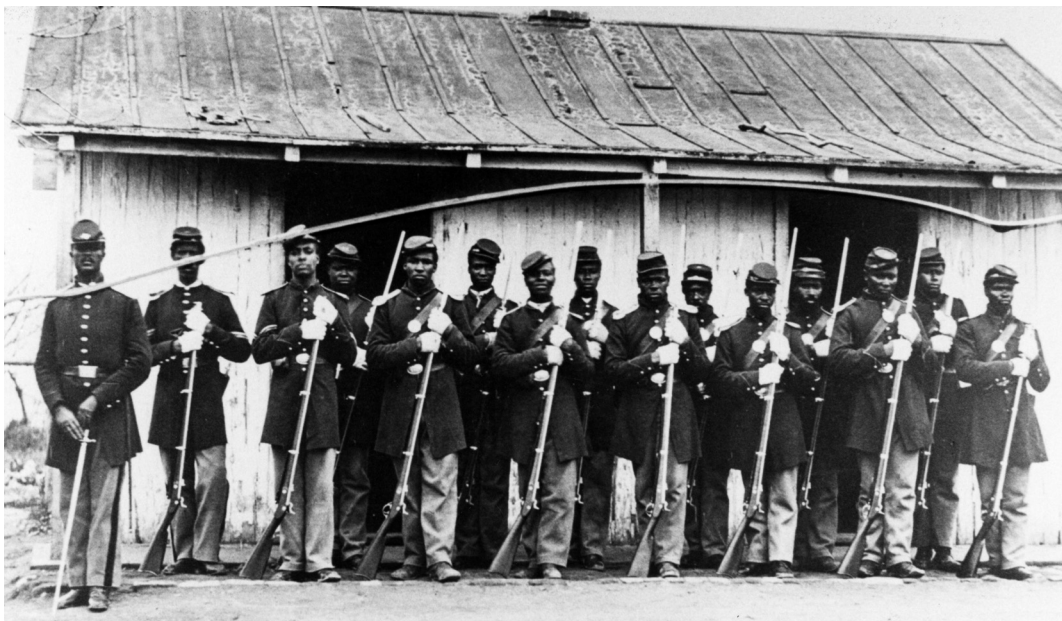
**T**he most well-known black regiments were formed by northern free blacks. But 80% of black soldiers were, like *Dr. Toer's* Noah Brave, former slaves. Despite racial discrimination in the Union Army, black troops fought fiercely in battles from Virginia to Louisiana. Other ex-slaves, including former Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman, served as scouts, locating Confederate forces and guiding Union troops through unfamiliar territory.

By working for and serving in the Union Army and Navy, black men and women helped win the war and defeat the slave owners. Yet, at the war's end, many

questions remained to be answered.

Northerners debated how to rebuild a loyal, prosperous nation. Southern whites asked, "Who will we get to work our fields?" And the four million freedmen and -women asked, "Will we now be free to live and raise families independent of white control?"

Such concerns affected how Americans answered a fundamental question: What should freedom and equality for black Americans really mean? As different groups, South and North, black and white, put forward their answers to this question, Reconstruction began to take shape.



## Fighting for Citizenship.

Members of the Provost Guard of the 107th Colored Troops, U.S. Army, pose in this undated photograph. African-American soldiers comprised about 10 percent of the Union Army; about one-third of all African Americans who enlisted lost their lives.

United States Army Military History Institute

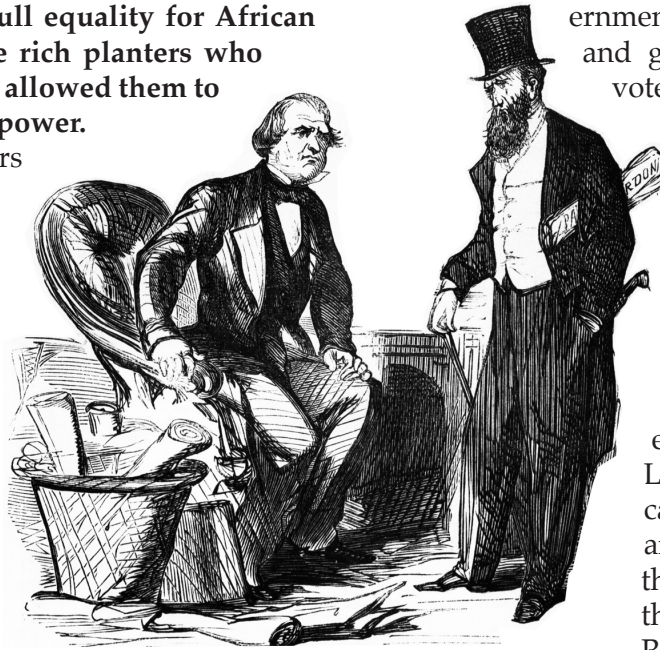
# WINNING THE WAR, LOSING THE PEACE

Shortly after the war ended, President Lincoln was assassinated and Vice President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee replaced him. Johnson had been loyal to the Union, but opposed full equality for African Americans. He pardoned the rich planters who had led the Confederacy, and allowed them to re-take positions of political power.

Ex-Confederate planters (known to the emancipated slaves as “buckras”) wanted to narrow the meaning of equality. They used state governments to try to push African Americans back toward slavery. In late 1865 and 1866 southern states passed laws called “Black Codes,” making it hard for African Americans to obtain land, and forcing most to sign year-long contracts to work for whites. African Americans could not vote or testify in court, and if they were insolent to whites, they could be put in jail.

This didn’t agree with ex-slaves’ ideas of freedom and equality. Across the South, they held protest meetings. They called on the federal government to abolish the Black Codes and grant black men the right to vote. African Americans in Mississippi wrote to Congress, “As we have fought in favor of liberty, justice, and humanity, we wish to vote in favor of it...”

The Black Codes also outraged many northern Republicans, even those who thought equality meant only equal treatment before the law. Led by the “Radical Republicans,” Congress passed laws and amendments to overthrow the Black Codes and weaken the big planters’ Democratic Party. Congress also sent Union troops and agents of the Freedmen’s Bureau to the South. When President Johnson opposed these moves, the Radicals tried to force him from office.



#### Pardoned.

One of Andrew Johnson’s most contentious moves was the pardoning of many former Confederate leaders, thus allowing them to reoccupy positions of power. In the caption to this cartoon, a pardoned ex-Confederate tells the President, “Look here, Andy, if you want Reconstruction, you had better set me over the whole thing down in our state.”

Frank Leslie’s *Illustrated Newspaper*, August 1865. American Social History Project



#### Electioneering in the South.

Former slaves hold a political meeting in this *Harper’s Weekly* illustration from 1868. During the early phase of Reconstruction, the northern press was generally sympathetic to such African-American attempts at political enfranchisement.

W. L. Sheppard, *Harper’s Weekly*, July 25, 1868. American Social History Project

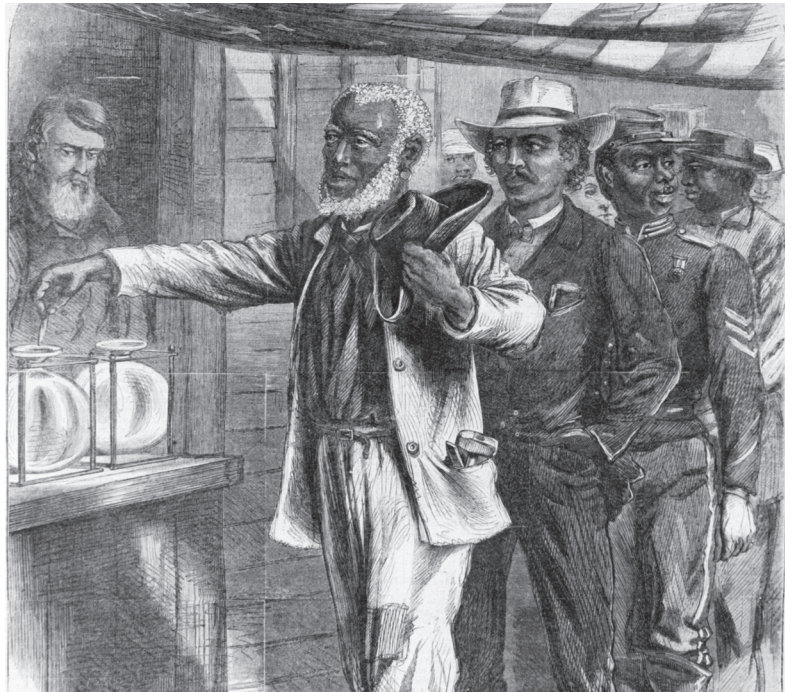
# THE POLITICS OF EQUALITY

Congress watched over Reconstruction from 1867 until the early 1870s. With white planters' power restricted, freedmen and -women could try out their own ideas about the meaning of freedom and equality. Politics was one of the most important arenas for such activity.

Freed slaves eagerly organized local political clubs and events, such as picnics and parades. When black men won the right to vote, they voted in large numbers for the party that had supported emancipation—the Republican party.

Black Republicans worked with northerners who had moved South, including former Freedmen's Bureau agents and those who had come to set up shops and farms. Some southern whites also joined the Republican Party. Most were poor farmers from the hills, hoping to protect the independent way of life of the "upcountry." At the top of the southern Republican party sat a few white businessmen interested in attracting investors and encouraging new industrial development.

Black voters elected hundreds of black officials to positions in local, state, and even national government. Though never a majority in any state legislature except South Carolina's, black representatives helped construct modern constitutions for southern states. They passed laws to help poor



"The First Vote."

This *Harper's Weekly* illustration from 1867 shows three archetypes of African Americans as depicted in the northern press during the early phase of Reconstruction: the skilled craftsman, the sophisticated urban dweller, and the Union Army veteran.

Alfred R. Waud, "The First Vote," *Harper's Weekly*, November 16, 1867. American Social History Project

people, black and white, and taxed rich planters to fund the South's first public schools and hospitals. As judges, sheriffs, and jury members, they tried to protect black communities from white power and violence.



**Radical Republicans in South Carolina.**

This composite photograph depicts the radical coalition of the South Carolina state legislature; among them are many African Americans holding elected positions for the first time.

Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

# CARPETBAGGERS, SCALAWAGS, & REDEEMERS

*"The registration of voters show that political power will be in the hands of our late slaves. What shame! What humiliation for us!"*

—EX-CONFEDERATE, 1867



**"The Wolf and the Lamb in Politics."**  
Two stereotypes of Reconstruction politics are shown in this 1875 illustration: the corrupt Republican "carpetbagger" and the naive, easily manipulated black voter.

(J. Wells Champney) Edward King, *The Great South...* (1875), American Social History Project

**A** large majority of white southerners resisted Reconstruction and refused to accept black men and women as equals. They supported the big planters' Democratic Party, the party of white supremacy.

The most well-known myths about Reconstruction are based on southern Democrats' description of their Republican opponents. The planters and other Democrats labeled southern white Republicans "scalawags" and treated them with open contempt. Northern "carpetbaggers" were charged with plundering the weakened South. Black officials were smeared as ignorant and corrupt. His-

torians now largely reject most of these charges as political slander and exaggeration.

Despite strong black support, southern Republicans faced difficult odds. Each group in the party—blacks, poor white farmers, bankers, and "carpetbaggers"—had different aims. Blacks themselves were divided between the mass of rural freed slaves and the leadership of elite free blacks from the cities. Deeply rooted racism within the party added to the difficulty of working together. Democrats exploited these weaknesses in opposing Reconstruction and calling for the "Redemption" of the South.



# THE GOSPEL & THE PRIMER



**Laura M. Towne and Students.**

Many northern reformers traveled to the Reconstruction South to assist newly-freed black communities. Members of "Gideon's Band," a group of young northerners, taught black pupils on South Carolina's Sea Islands. One such reformer was Laura M. Towne, who founded the Penn School for black students.

R. A. Holland, ed., *Letters and Diaries of Laura M. Towne* (1912), American Social History Project

*"If I never does nothing more while I live, I shall give my children a chance to go to school, for I considers education the next best thing to liberty."*

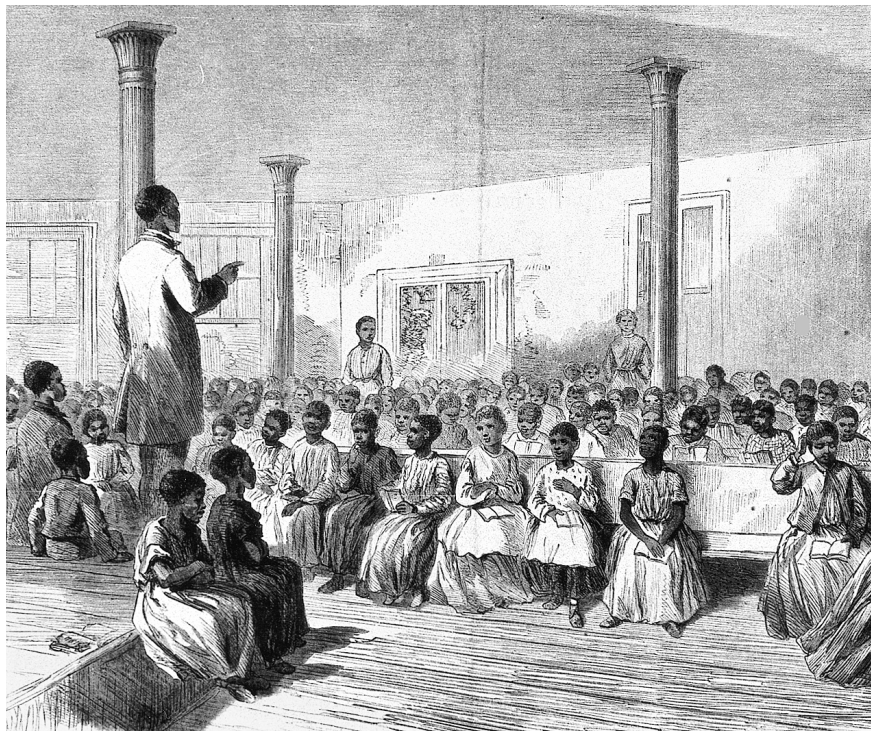
—MISSISSIPPI FREEDMAN, 1869

African Americans' hopes and dreams, suppressed during slavery, were briefly allowed to flower during Reconstruction. The actions of black men and women in these years laid the foundations of the modern black community. They reunited families and built lasting institutions, such as the black church. And they struggled to overcome the legacies of slavery, such as illiteracy, which crippled their efforts at individual and collective advancement.

During slavery, planters had tried to keep slaves from learning to read and write, sometimes even passing laws against educating them. After Emancipation, free men and women displayed a tremendous desire to learn.

Some freed slaves wanted to learn to read the Bible. Others saw that they needed the skills to read land titles, figure out wages, and advance themselves in the new world of freedom.

Northerners, including a few African Americans, came South to teach the freed slaves. These Yankee teachers were hard-working and idealistic, though sometimes patronizing. Some treated freed slaves as "helpless grown-up children." Like many Yankees (including *Dr. Toer's* Mr. Jones), some teachers thought equality meant the ex-slaves should learn to think and act just like northerners. "We can make them all that we desire them to be," one Yankee teacher wrote from North Carolina.

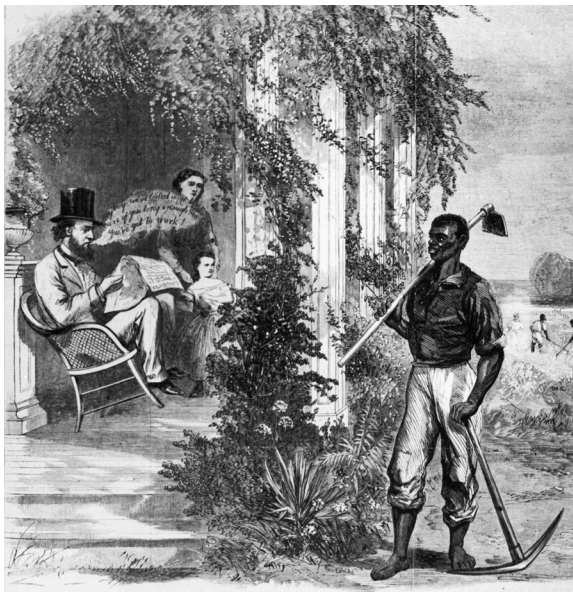


**Zion School for Colored Children.**

The Zion School in Charleston, South Carolina, here shown in an engraving based on an earlier sketch by *Harper's Weekly* reporter Alfred Waud, was one of many run by African Americans in the years immediately after the Civil War. "It is a peculiarity of this school," Waud reported, "that it is entirely under the superintendence of colored teachers."

Alfred R. Waud, *Harper's Weekly*, December 15, 1866. American Social History Project

## “40 ACRES AND A MULE”



**“The Great Labor Question From a Southern Point of View.”**

A Harper’s cartoon ironically contrasts the idle Southern planter with the industrious former slave. “My boy,” the planter says, “we’ve toiled and taken care of you long enough – now you’ve got to work!”

Harper’s Weekly, July 29, 1865. American Social History Project



**“Plowing in South Carolina.”**

An 1866 engraving depicts a freedman plowing his land. Ownership of land was a crucial issue to many former slaves, who saw it as vital to their independence. Although the former slaves never received their “forty acres and a mule,” some, such as those in the Sea Islands and along coastal areas of South Carolina and Georgia, did acquire land; in many cases, only to have it revert to white ownership after the war.

James E. Taylor, Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, October 20, 1866. American Social History Project

*“We has a right to the land.  
 . . . Our wives, our children,  
 our husbands has been  
 sold over and over again to  
 purchase the lands we now  
 locates upon. . . And didn’t  
 we clear the land and raise  
 the crops of corn, of cotton,  
 of tobacco, of rice, of sugar,  
 of everything? And then  
 didn’t them large cities in  
 the North grow up on the  
 cotton and sugar that we  
 made? . . . I say they has  
 grown rich, and my people  
 is poor”*

—BAYLEY WYAT, VIRGINIA FREEDMAN,  
 1866

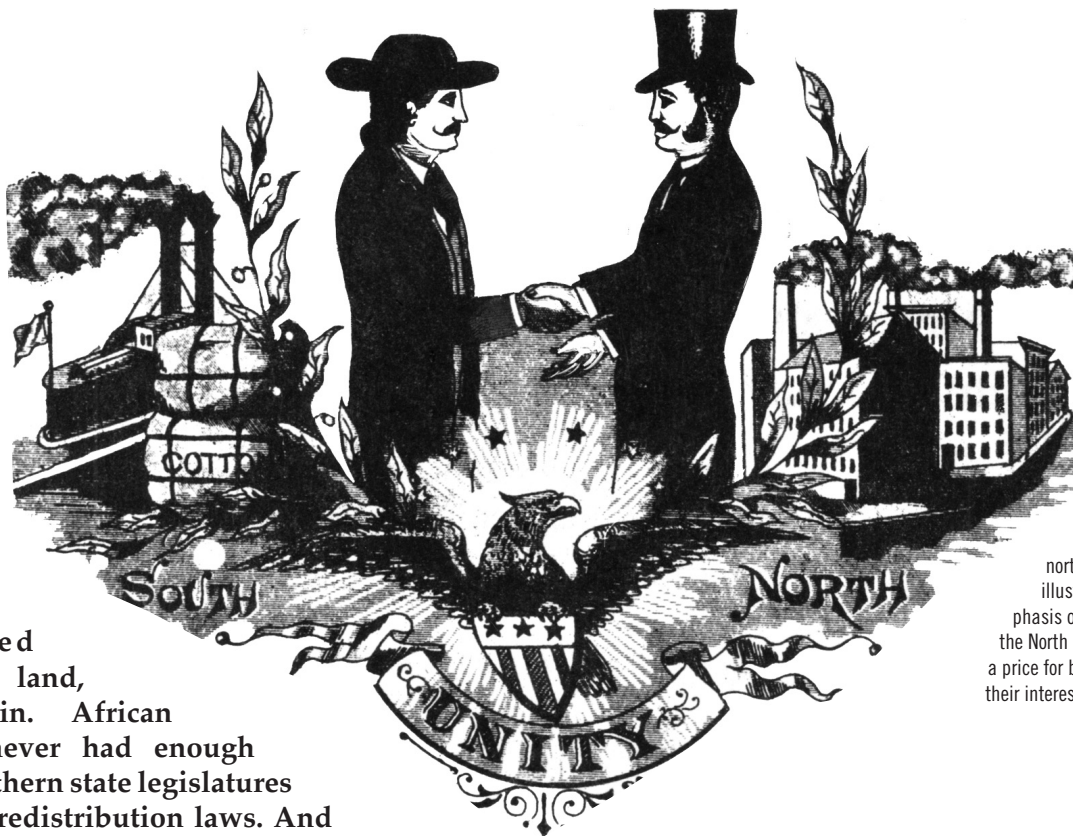
**C**ontrol of the land was a pivotal issue throughout the Reconstruction era. At the war’s end, belief that Yankees would give ex-slaves “40 acres and a mule” was widespread. Freedmen and -women felt they deserved land in payment for their work during slavery and their role in defending the Union. Also, like millions of white Americans who settled the frontier, ex-slaves felt that owning land was vital to true freedom. With land, a family could grow its own food and be independent. But as long as they had to work for somebody else, especially a white man, they could never achieve full equality.

The idea that Yankees would divide the plantations was more than wishful thinking. In late 1861, Union forces had captured the South Carolina Sea Islands and turned over some land to the freed slaves. This area, where African Americans spoke in “Gullah” dialect, was home to Dr. Toer’s Marly Green.

In January 1865, Union General William T. Sherman set aside millions of acres in coastal Georgia and South Carolina for use by ex-slaves. Each family was to have 40 acres of farm land. While thousands of families chose their lots, millions more saw this as a sign of larger changes to come.

But in late 1865, President Johnson reversed Sherman’s orders and returned the land to the former slaveowners. Bitter ex-slaves, like Marly Green, had to sign work contracts with their former masters or leave the land. Some resisted, but the Army and the Freedmen’s Bureau enforced Johnson’s decision.

# THE EMANCIPATED WORKER



**Unity.**  
A southern cotton planter shakes hands with a northern industrialist in this illustration. The postwar emphasis on reconciliation between the North and South often came at a price for black freedmen, who saw their interests ultimately abandoned in the name of "Unity."

Library of Congress

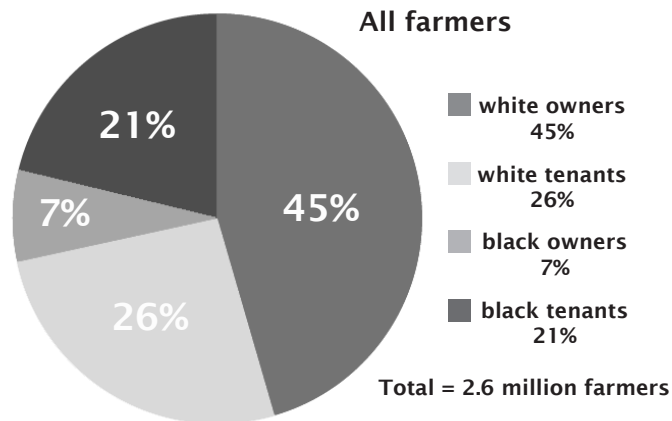
**Ex-slaves continued to hope for land, but in vain. African Americans never had enough power in southern state legislatures to pass land redistribution laws. And when Radical Republican leaders asked Congress to endorse redistribution, most northern Republicans refused, arguing that planters' property rights were more important than the freed people's desire for independence.**

By the late 1860s, the northern Republican Party was growing more business-oriented and less dependent on working people. Many northern Republican leaders supported the growth of large industrial corporations and accepted the decline of independent small farmers and craftsmen. Some Republicans also felt that if African Americans divided the land and used it to grow food, the vital cotton economy would be ruined.

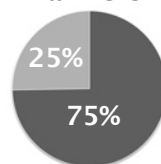
By 1868 it was clear that the big planters would keep the land. Forced to work for "the buckra," freedmen and -women like Marly resisted unfair contracts and the slave-like gang-labor system. African-American parents fought for their children's right to leave the fields in order to attend school. Above all, black families struggled to reduce white control of their lives and labor and to expand the domain of family autonomy.

African-American farmworkers won some victories, but could not break the power of the big planters. They settled for sharecropping, where black families worked a piece of land on their own as tenants and received a share of the crops. Though sharecropping provided a degree of independence it often led to problems of debt and poverty.

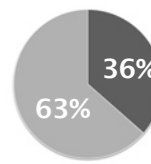
## Land Ownership and Southern Farms, 1900



### African-American farmers



### White farmers

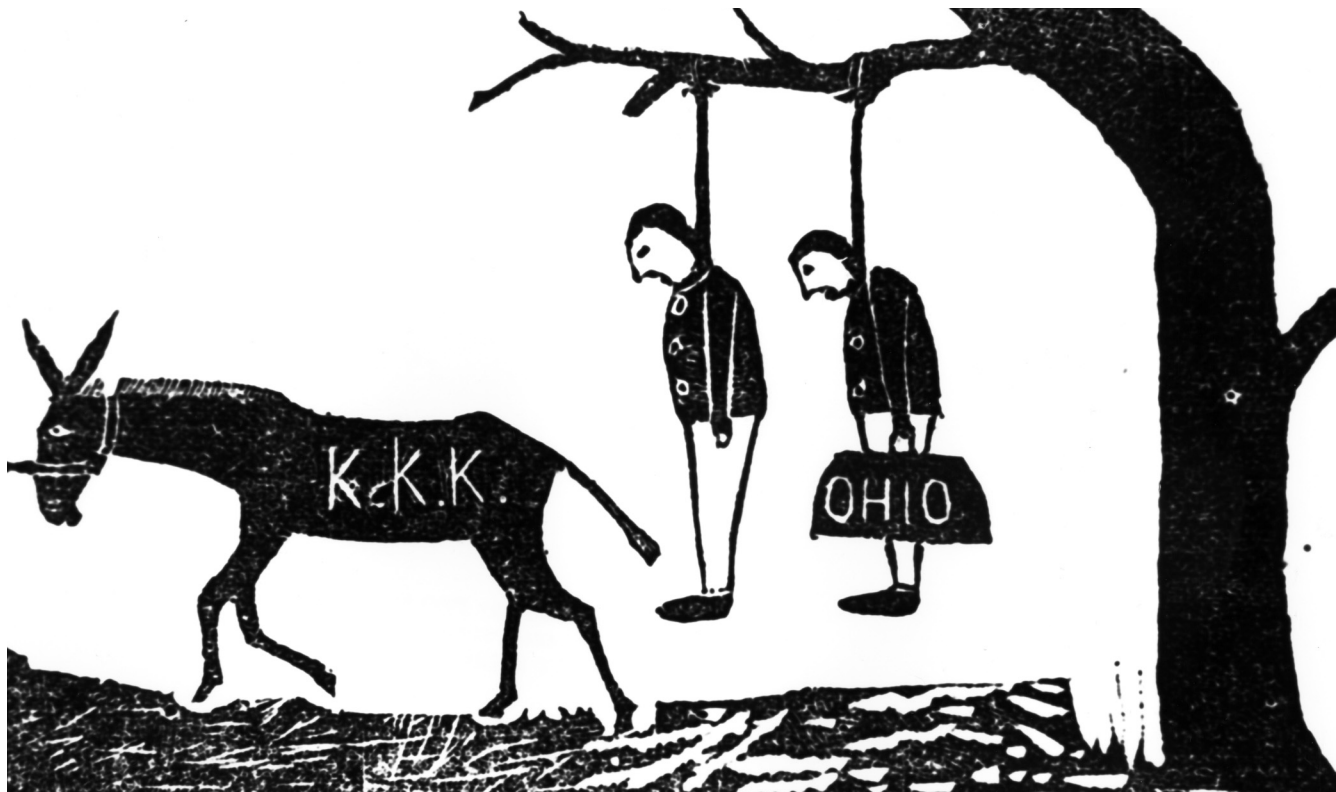


### Southern Farmers, 1900.

More than 25 years after the end of the Civil War, the results of the failure to redistribute southern farm land to the emancipated slaves can be seen in these 1900 figures for who owned farms and who worked as tenant farmers on land owned by others.

U.S. Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States (1975), American Social History Project

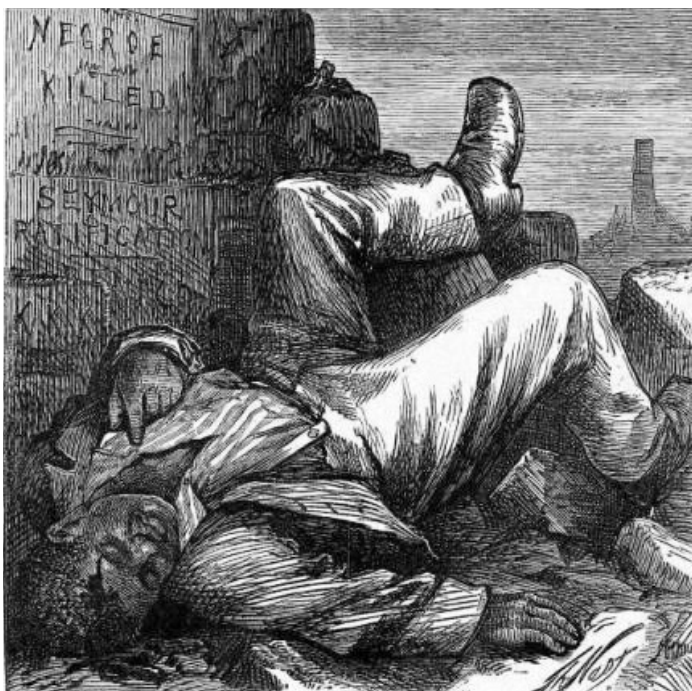
# WHITE TERROR



“A Prospective Scene in the ‘City of Oaks’”

A crude illustration in the *Independent Monitor* of Tuscaloosa, Alabama, suggests the treatment the newspaper’s editors felt Republican “carpetbaggers” deserved. The newspaper’s editor was the Grand Cyclops of the local Ku Klux Klan.

Tuscaloosa *Independent Monitor*, September 1, 1868. Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama



“One Vote Less.”

This *Harper’s Weekly* cartoon reflects how the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment in July 1868, which granted former slaves the right to vote, was met with a violent response from white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan.

*Harpers Weekly*, August 8, 1868; from *Harpweek: Explore History*, <http://www.harpweek.com/>

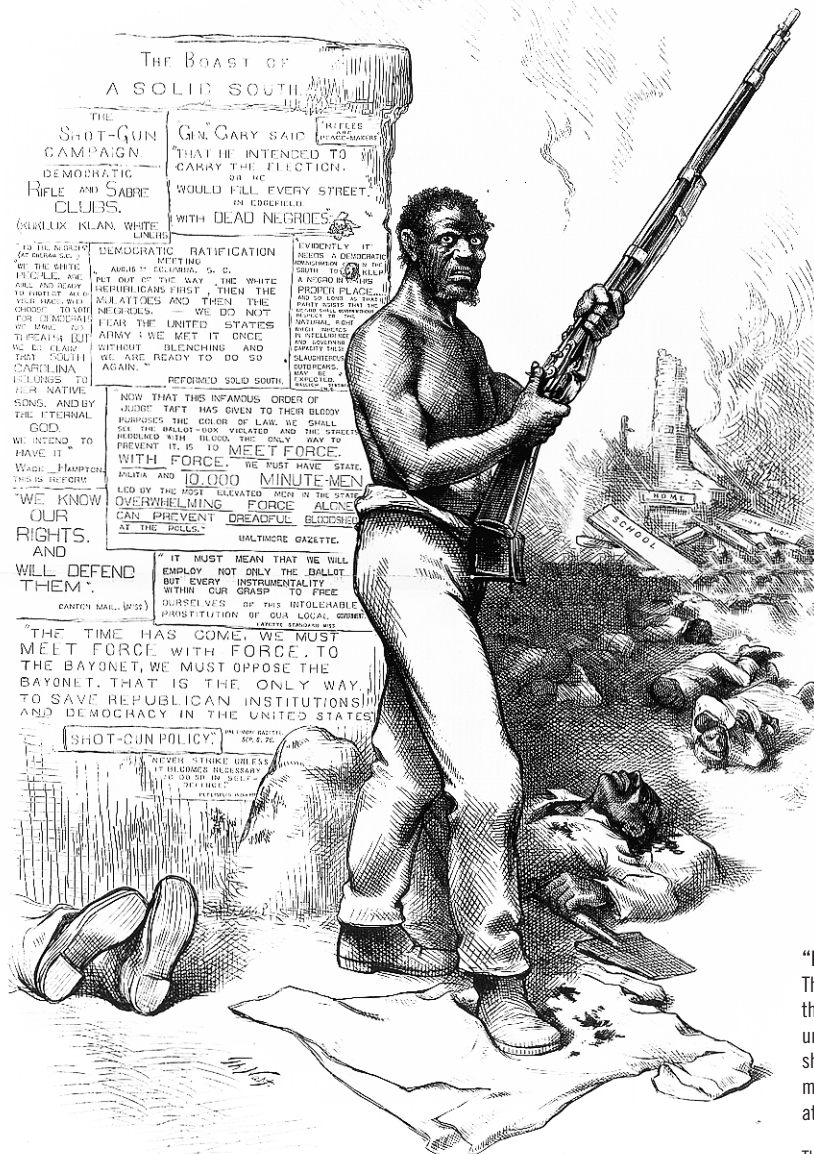
**R**econstruction was a bloody era. Many southern whites responded to African-American freedom with rage and violence. Whites battered, whipped, raped, shot, hung, and mutilated freedmen and -women throughout the Reconstruction years. In the early 1870s, some 20,000 black men, women, and children had been killed by whites. Today historians disagree about the exact numbers, but most believe thousands of African Americans were victims of white terror.

Some white violence was random. But more often terror was used to resist racial equality and return power to white hands. The Ku Klux Klan, which drew wide support from southern whites, served as a military arm of the Democratic Party. Black politicians, African-American voters, and interracial political groups were favorite targets for Klan attack.



**Victims of White Terror, Colfax, Louisiana.**  
 A Harper's Weekly engraving depicts the grim aftermath of an attack on the African-American community in Colfax, Louisiana by an armed white militia in April 1873. Some 280 blacks were killed after seeking shelter in a local courthouse.

Harper's Weekly, May 10, 1873.  
 American Social History Project



The Klan and other groups also served to enforce economic inequality, “encouraging” African Americans to work for whites and punishing those who complained about ill-treatment or fraudulent contracts. Assaults on leaders of labor protests were common, as were attacks on independent African-American farms, schools, and churches.

Some African Americans fought back with violence, but they were outgunned. Others appealed to Congress, and in 1872 the Army and federal courts intervened against the Klan. But soon white violence began again.

**“He Wants a Change, Too.”**

Thomas Nast's 1876 Harper's Weekly cartoon, drawn in the wake of the massacre of African Americans in Hamburg, South Carolina, is unusual in several respects. Nast not only denounced the “bloody shirt” campaign of violence waged against southern blacks, but, unlike most northern whites, appeared to sympathize with African-American attempts at self-defense.

Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly, October 28, 1876. American Social History Project

# THE END OF RECONSTRUCTION

By the early 1870s Reconstruction was collapsing. Weakened by internal divisions, southern Republicans could not withstand the violent attacks by Democrats and their supporters. Economically dominated by the planters, African Americans had too little power to strike back effectively.

Northern Republicans, struggling with their own problems of political corruption, industrial unrest, and nationwide depression, grew less willing to intervene in the South. Northerners turned away as southern Democrats used fraudulent elections, violence, and intimidation to regain political, economic, and social power.

The final blow came with the 1876 Presidential election, which was marked by voter fraud on both sides. The Democratic candidate seemed to win the most votes, but Republicans refused to surrender the White House. Fears of a new civil war spread.

In early 1877, national Republican leaders struck a deal with the Democrats. Republican Rutherford Hayes was declared President and, in return, the few U.S. troops still in the South were removed. Reconstruction was officially over.

In the decades that followed African Americans' lives grew harder. By the 1890s only whites could vote in the South, and southern political life was firmly under white control. The "Jim Crow" system of segregation was put into place, tightly restricting black social and economic life. The institutions African Americans had created during Reconstruction, most notably the independent black church, helped them to survive these painful years. But it was many decades—almost a full century—before America would again confront the questions of freedom and equality it had failed to solve during Reconstruction.



**A Republican "Scarecrow" Fails to Staunch Southern Violence**

An unrepentant southern rebel discovers the true nature of the federal government's commitment to defend African-American rights. "Come on, boys!" he shouts in this 1874 cartoon, "Old Grant's bluster about our killing Republicans is only a military scarecrow, after all."

*Harper's Weekly*, September 26, 1874. American Social History Project



**"Clasp Hands Across the Bloody Chasm"**

In an 1872 cartoon, some northern Republicans urge a reluctant African American to "Clasp hands across the bloody chasm" with a white Confederate. By 1877 most northerners were ready to let white southerners define the meaning of black freedom and equality.

Thomas Nast, *Harper's Weekly*, August 24, 1872. American Social History Project

## NEW WAYS OF SEEING



### *Birth of a Nation*

Considered a landmark of early American cinema, D.W. Griffith's 1915 film *Birth of a Nation* depicted Reconstruction as a time when a valiant Ku Klux Klan restored the birthright of southern whites, wrested from them by avaricious northerners and craven African Americans. Most of the "black" characters in the film were portrayed by white actors in makeup.

Motion Picture, Broadcasting, and Recorded Sound Division, Library of Congress



### Hiram Revels, United States Senator

Hiram Revels of Mississippi was the first African American to serve in Congress, serving a term as Senator from 1870-1871.

The seat he occupied had once been held by Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

L. Prang and Company (after a painting by Theodore Kaufmann), 1870,  
chromolithograph, 14 X 11 3/4 inches.  
Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress

**D**.W. Griffith's classic 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* is considered a turning point in the development of American cinema. Based on the 1905 novel *The Clansman* by Thomas Dixon, Jr., the film glorified the Ku Klux Klan as the savior of white civilization from African-American corruption and "mis-rule." Its stereotyped images of vicious and cowardly freed people, performed by white actors in blackface, distorted Americans' vision of Reconstruction for years afterward.

But the actual visual record of Reconstruction was more diverse and, for a time, promised to transform the way Americans viewed race and equality. While many illustrated publications continued to disseminate racial stereotypes influenced by white supremacist beliefs, others offered a new way to envision black Americans.

Prominent among such new images were portraits of black leaders. For example, in 1870 the Boston firm of Louis Prang and Company, one of the leading dealers of chromolithographs (popular color prints), published a picture of Hiram R. Revels, the newly admitted senator from Mississippi.

One admirer of the portrait was the great abolitionist Frederick Douglass. "Whatever may be the prejudices of those who may look upon it," Douglass commented, "they will be compelled to admit that the Mississippi Senator is a man, and one who will easily pass for a man among men. We colored men so often see ourselves described and painted as monkeys, that we think it a great piece of good fortune to find an exception to this general rule." Perhaps, he continued, black Americans could now share in the pleasure of pictures enjoyed by white citizens: "Heretofore, colored Americans have thought little of adorning their parlors with pictures. They have had to do with the stern, and I may say, the ugly realities of life. Pictures come not with slavery and oppression and destitution, but with liberty, fair play, leisure, and refinement. These conditions are now possible to colored American citizens, and I think the walls of their houses will soon begin to bear evidences of their altered relations to the people about them."

That promise, along with other hopes for equality, ultimately would be betrayed. But the era of Reconstruction left behind a visual record that lets us see the many ways freed people exercised and fought for their new rights.

# LEARN MORE ABOUT *DR. TOER'S*

## Scholarly Works

American Social History Project, *Freedom's Unfinished Revolution: An Inquiry into the Civil War and Reconstruction* (1996) This history textbook, designed for high school students, includes many primary documents and images.

Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (1988)

Eric Foner, *A Short History of Reconstruction* (1990)

This definitive historical account of Reconstruction covers the political, social, and economic aspects of the era.

Eric Foner and Joshua Brown, *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction* (2005) This volume alternates chapters by Foner that lay out a brief history of slavery, emancipation, Reconstruction, and white backlash with visual essays by Brown that explore the era's pictorial representations of these subjects.

Tera Hunter, *To 'Joy My Freedom: Southern Black Women's Lives and Labors After the Civil War* (1998) Hunter explores the experiences of black working women in Atlanta, including a detailed account of an 1881 strike by laundresses.

Leon F. Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (1979) This classic study examines how newly emancipated slaves understood and experienced freedom in the years after the Civil War.

Dorothy Sterling, ed., *The Trouble They Seen: The Story of Reconstruction in the Words of African Americans* (1994) Excerpts from diaries, letters, and newspaper accounts tell the story of freed slaves' aspirations, achievements, and struggles in the years following the Civil War.

## Online Resources

*Freedmen and Southern Society Project*,

<http://www.history.umd.edu/Freedmen/fssphome.htm>

A rich collection of primary source documents from the National Archives can be found here, along with a detailed chronology of emancipation.

*HarpWeek*, <http://www.harpweek.com>

This site devoted to the nineteenth-century newspaper *Harper's Weekly* contains many original illustrations and political cartoons from the Reconstruction period.

*History Matters: The U.S. Survey on the Web*, <http://historymatters.gmu.edu>

This comprehensive site includes numerous text and image documents on the experience of African Americans during the Reconstruction era.

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## THE *WHO BUILT AMERICA?* MATERIALS

*Dr. Toer's Amazing Magic Lantern Show* and nine other documentaries are a part of the *Who Built America?* series, which explores the central role working women and men played in key events and developments of American History. See also the two-volume *Who Built America?* textbook, *Freedom's Unfinished Revolution*, a high school text on the Civil War and Reconstruction, and the *WBA?* interactive CD-ROM.

Complete list of *WBA?* documentaries:

*History: The Big H*— This film-noir detective story introduces the history of working people and the challenge of understanding the past.



*Tea Party Etiquette*— Boston shoemaker George Robert Twelves Hewes narrates his experience of the Boston Tea Party, Boston Massacre, and the American Revolution.

*Daughters of Free Men*— Lucy Hall leaves her New England farm to work in the Lowell textile mills of the 1830s and confronts a new world of opportunity and exploitation.

*Five Points*— The story of 1850s New York City and its notorious immigrant slum district, the Five Points, is seen through the conflicting perspectives of a native born Protestant reformer and an Irish-Catholic family.

*Doing As They Can*— A fugitive woman slave describes her life, work, and day-to-day resistance on a North Carolina cotton plantation during the 1840s and 1850s.

*Dr. Toer's Amazing Magic Lantern Show*— The struggle to realize the promise of freedom following the Civil War is told by ex-slave J.W. Toer and his traveling picture show.

*1877: The Grand Army of Starvation*— In the summer of 1877 eighty thousand railroad workers went on strike and hundreds of thousands soon followed. The Great Uprising began a new era of conflict about equality in the industrial age.

*Savage Acts: Wars, Fairs and Empire*— The story of the Philippine War (1899-1902) and turn-of-the-century world's fairs reveal the links between everyday life in the U.S. and the creation of a new expansionist foreign policy.

*Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl*— Framed by the 1909 New York shirtwaist strike, this program presents a panoramic portrait of immigrant working women in the turn-of-the-century city.

*Up South: African-American Migration in the Era of the Great War*— Narrated by a Mississippi barber and a sharecropper woman, *Up South* tells the dramatic story of African-American migration to industrial cities during World War I.