

## Station 1

## Constitutional Amendments during Reconstruction

The group that experienced the most change, both short and long term, as a result of the Civil War were those African Americans who had been born into slavery. After Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, many abolitionists argued that the Emancipation did not go far enough, while the Copperhead Democrats thought he had exceeded his executive authority. This document changed the goal of the North to now being a fight to end the institution of slavery.

With the Emancipation as a temporary war measure, Lincoln & abolitionist politicians worked on passing a constitutional amendment that would end slavery. The 13<sup>th</sup> amendment was passed by a Republican-led Senate in April 1864 and in January 1865 by the House of Representatives. The necessary three-fourths of states had ratified the amendment by December 1865, eight months after the Civil War ended. With its ratification, the “peculiar institution” that had shaped & divided the United States was eradicated.

After the conflict had ended, Radical Republicans in Congress passed the Civil Rights Bill of 1866 that conferred upon African Americans the privilege of American citizenship. President Johnson, arguing that the legislation was unconstitutional, vetoed the bill, but Congress overrode it with a two-thirds majority. As a result, Republicans sought to propose a constitutional amendment that would provide similar protections to African Americans as the Civil Rights Bill. The 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, approved by Congress in June 1866 and ratified by the states in 1868, (1) declared all persons born or naturalized in the United States were citizens, (2) obligated the states to respect the rights of U.S. citizens and provide them with equal protection of the laws and due process of law, (3) reduced Congressional representation for states that denied voting rights to blacks, and (4) disqualified high-ranking Confederates from holding state and federal office.

Both southerners and women’s rights advocates were united in their opposition of the amendment’s provisions. For the first time, the Constitution included the word *male* referring to national citizenship and a citizen’s right to vote. With the passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, suffragists felt as though their time had come, but with nothing to show for it.

The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, passed by Congress in 1869 and ratified in 1870, marked the completion of the Radical Republicans goal of full political and social equality for African Americans by preventing states from denying voting rights to any male, regardless of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony both fought to add the word *sex* added to this list, but lost the battle that would not be won for another fifty years.

## Station 2

## Political Plans for Reconstruction

In the wake of the Civil War, many factions had divided opinions about how the country should be reunited following the long and bloody separation of the Union. President Lincoln, President Johnson, and Radical Republican members of Congress had three distinct visions on how the seceded Southern states should be readmitted into the Union.

Developed more than a year before the end of the Civil War, Lincoln's plan for Reconstruction surprised many by how apparently lenient it was toward the Southern states. President Lincoln's plan provided for (1) full pardons for most Confederates who took an oath of allegiance to the Union and Constitution and accepted the emancipation of slaves, and (2) a state could be readmitted when at least 10% of voters took the loyalty oath. Because of this requirement, Lincoln's plan became known as the "Ten Percent Plan"

Congress responded by passing the more stringent Wade-Davis Bill in 1864 that required 50% of voters to take a loyalty oath before a given state could be readmitted to the Union. In opposition to this bill, Lincoln utilized the pocket veto, where he did not sign the bill before the session of Congress adjourned, thereby letting it expire.

As a Southern Democrat put on Lincoln's ticket for reelection to appeal to Northern Democrats, Andrew Johnson turned out to be the executive that would be responsible for overseeing the Reconstruction process after Lincoln's assassination. Though Johnson was an avowed white supremacist, he strongly opposed the Southern aristocracy that had a vice grip on Southern society in the Antebellum period. In May 1865, Johnson issued his own Reconstruction plan that bore many similarities to Lincoln's: in addition to Lincoln's terms, it disenfranchised all high-ranking Confederates and wealthy planters, while allowing for individual presidential pardons (something Johnson made frequent use of for many Southerners). Under Johnson's plan and excessive pardons, many former Confederate leaders were back in office by the fall of 1865.

The harsh response to Johnson's Reconstruction plan from Radical Republicans in Congress marked the beginning of the second round of Reconstruction—one that would be much harsher on Southerners and more protective of freed African Americans.

The Congressional (or Radical Republicans') plan for Reconstruction included full citizenship rights, including voting, for African Americans, and Union military occupation of the South to preserve and protect the rights and freedom of African Americans. The Reconstruction Act of 1867—passed over President Johnson's veto—met all of these provisions by not recognizing any state that had already been readmitted under Lincoln or Johnson's plans and (1) dividing the former Confederate states into five military districts, each under Union military control, (2) required seceded states to ratify the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, and (3) place guarantees in their constitutions for granting voting rights to all adult males before being readmitted into the Union

### Station 3

### Sharecropping

What the newly freed slaves wanted above all else was land on which they could support their own families. During and immediately after the war, many former slaves established subsistence farms on land that had been abandoned to the Union army. During Sherman's March, General William Sherman issued Special Field Orders No. 15, which reserved large parts of the conquered South for settlement by freed families in 40-acre tracts. Rumors also quickly spread amongst southern blacks that surplus military mules would be given to these freed families to help plow the land. As a result, many newly freed slaves followed General Sherman on his "March to the Sea" through the Confederacy.

After President Lincoln's death, President Andrew Johnson revoked Special Field Orders No. 15, hampering efforts by African Americans to gain economic independence after their emancipation. The failure to provide land to any newly freed slaves reduced many former slaves to depend on the wealthy planter class that had been their previous masters.

During Reconstruction, former slaves--and many poor, small white farmers--became trapped in a new system known as sharecropping. Lacking money and land of their own, former slaves were forced to work for large landowners. Initially, planters, with the support of the Freedmen's Bureau, sought to restore labor of African Americans under the supervision of white overseers. But the freedmen, who wanted freedom and independence, refused to sign contracts that required this supervised labor, saying that it too closely resembled slavery. Ultimately, sharecropping emerged as a sort of compromise.

Instead of cultivating land in groups supervised by overseers, landowners divided plantations into 20 to 50 acre plots suitable for farming by a single family. In exchange for land, a cabin, and supplies, sharecroppers agreed to raise a cash crop (usually cotton) and to give half the crop to their landlord. The high interest rates landlords and sharecroppers charged for goods bought on credit (sometimes as high as 70 percent a year) transformed sharecropping into a system that forced newly freed slaves to continue to depend on the wealthy planter class in the South for their survival. The freedmen found that "freedom could make folks proud but it didn't make 'em rich."

Nevertheless, the sharecropping system did allow former slaves a degree of freedom and independence somewhat greater than they experienced under slavery. As a symbol of their newly won independence, freedmen had teams of mules drag their former slave cabins away from the slave quarters into their own fields. Wives and daughters sharply reduced their labor in the fields and instead devoted more time to childcare and housework. For the first time, black families could divide their time between fieldwork and housework in accordance with their own family priorities.

## The Sharecropper Cycle of Poverty



- 1 Sharecropper is provided land and seed. In exchange, he promises landowner half the crop.



- 2 Sharecropper buys food and clothing on credit from landowner's store.



- 3 Sharecropper plants and harvests crop.

By the time sharecroppers had shared their crops and paid their debts, they rarely had any money left. Often they were uneducated and could not argue with landowners or merchants who cheated them. A sharecropper frequently became tied to one plantation, having no choice but to work until his debts were paid.



- 4 Sharecropper gives landowner crop to sell. Sharecropper will get half the earnings, minus the cost of his purchases for the year.



- 5 When settling up, landowner says that sharecropper owes more than he has earned.

- 6 To pay debt, sharecropper must promise landowner a greater share of next year's crop.

## Station 4

## Freedmen's Bureau

The Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands (known as the Freedmen's Bureau) was created by Congress in March 1865 to assist for one year in the transition from slavery to freedom in the South. The Bureau was given "the supervision and management of all abandoned lands and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen"

The bureau was run by the War Department, and its first and most important commissioner was General O.O. Howard, a Civil War hero sympathetic to blacks. The Bureau's task was to help the Southern blacks and whites make the transition from slavery to freedom.

Their responsibilities included introducing a new system of free labor, overseeing some 3,000 schools for free-persons, settling disputes and enforcing contracts between the usually white landowners and their black labor force, and securing justice for blacks in state courts.

The Bureau was renewed by Congress in 1866 but was vetoed by President Andrew Johnson, who thought it was unconstitutional. Johnson was opposed to having the federal government secure black rights. Despite Johnson's Constitutional objections, Congress passed the bill over his veto.

Many Southern whites were opposed to blacks having any basic rights at all, and the Bureau faced violent and broad opposition from white supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan that sought to prevent former slaves from exercising their new freedoms or creating a new life beyond slavery. The Bureau was able to accomplish some of its goals, especially in the field of education. It established a number of colleges and training schools for blacks, including Howard University (named for General Howard) and Hampton University, both historically black colleges.

Howard believed that the mission of the Bureau was a temporary one, wanting to avoid black dependency on the federal agency. He firmly believed that African Americans should obtain all their rights as quickly as possible, but failed to see that because of Southern white hostility and long-term federal support was necessary for them to do so. The Bureau also failed to bring together whites and blacks in the South because it lacked the means to do so. It needed support from Southern and Northern politicians and received little help from either. Its staff was cut significantly by 1869 and it ceased operations in 1872 due to lack of political support and funding.



# THE FREEDMAN'S BUREAU!

AN AGENCY TO KEEP THE **NEGRO** IN IDLENESS AT THE **EXPENSE** OF THE WHITE MAN.  
 TWICE VETOED BY THE **PRESIDENT**, AND MADE A LAW BY **CONGRESS**.  
**SUPPORT CONGRESS & YOU SUPPORT THE NEGRO. SUSTAIN THE PRESIDENT & YOU PROTECT THE WHITE MAN**

IN THE SWEAT OF THY  
FACE SHALT THOU EAT THY BREAD

Freedman's Bureau!

Negro Estimate of Freedom!

CONGRESS, IN JULY, 1866,  
VOTES THE

**NEGRO TROOPS**  
**\$300**  
Each as a Bounty

The same CONGRESS  
IN JUNE, 1866,  
VOTES THE

**WHITE Veterans**  
OF 1861 & 1862,  
**\$100**  
Each as a Bounty.

The NEGRO GETS \$300; the  
WHITE SOLDIER, \$200 in all—  
All of the WHITE Soldiers served  
THREE Years; none of the NE-  
GROES over TWO Years.

What is the use for me to  
work as long as dey make dese  
appropriations.

THE  
WHITE MAN  
MUST WORK TO  
KEEP HIS CHILDREN  
AND PAY HIS TAXES

APPROPRIATED BY CONGRESS,  
JULY, 1866,  
To Support the Freedman's Bureau  
**\$6,944,500**

AS FOLLOWS:

Commissioners and Clerks for Negroes,	\$200,000
Printing for Negroes, Houses and Wood for Negroes,	15,000
Clothing for Negroes,	1,750,000
Food for Negroes,	3,108,250
Medicine for Negroes,	500,000
Railroad Fare for Negroes,	1,320,000
School Masters & School Houses for Negroes,	530,000
<b>TOTAL,</b>	<b>\$6,944,450</b>

APPROPRIATED BY CONGRESS,  
FOR THE WHITE MAN,  
**HEAVY TAXES, HARD LABOR,**

## Station 5

## Black Codes

The Union victory in the Civil War gave more than 4 million slaves their freedom, but African Americans faced new obstacles and injustices during the Reconstruction era. By late 1865, even after the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment outlawed slavery across the country, the status of freed blacks in society was still very much in question.

During Andrew Johnson's presidency and under his Reconstruction plan, former wealthy planters sought to establish their authority in the Southern states. They helped enact a series of restrictive laws known as the "black codes" which were designed to restrict freed blacks' activity and limit their job opportunities to agricultural labor, similar to under slavery, despite slavery having been abolished by the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment.

After Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment became the law of the land, the status of African Americans in Southern society became a major issue. Lincoln shocked many by largely ignoring how former slaves would be treated under his Ten Percent Plan for Reconstruction. Lincoln's successor, Andrew Johnson, believed in states' rights to determine issues such as voting requirements and, too, offered virtually no federal protection of the rights of former slaves.

The first black codes were enacted in Mississippi and South Carolina. These codes were meant to allow the white landowners to still control the labor force. Mississippi's law required blacks to have written evidence of employment for the upcoming year each January; if they left before their contract expired, they would be forced to forfeit earlier wages and were subject to arrest. In South Carolina, a law prohibited blacks from holding any job other than farming unless they paid an annual tax of \$10-\$100.

The primary purpose of these black codes was to restrict blacks' labor and activities. Further examples of black codes enacted by the Southern states included limiting the type of property that African Americans could own (e.g. could not own land, but could own a mule or a cabin). Other black codes included establishing punishments, such as beating and forced labor, for those African Americans that broke labor contracts with wealthy planters.

After Radical Republicans in Congress passed the Reconstruction Act of 1867, which required states to ratify the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment that guaranteed equal protection of the Constitution to former slaves before the state could rejoin the Union, blacks won election to southern state governments and even to the U.S. Congress. Mississippi elected the first black U.S. Senator, Hiram Revels, in 1870. Despite this advancement in the status of African Americans in Reconstruction, violent organizations like the Ku Klux Klan enforced the black codes to continue the supremacy of plantation owners.

By the end of Reconstruction in 1877, blacks had seen little improvement in their economic and social status, largely due to the black codes and their widespread enforcement by the KKK.

## Excerpt from Louisiana Black Codes, 1865

**Sec. 1.** Be it ordained by the police jury of the parish of St. Landry, That no negro shall be allowed to pass within the limits of said parish without special permit in writing from his employer. Whoever shall violate this provision shall pay a fine of two dollars and fifty cents, or in default thereof shall be forced to work four days on the public road, or suffer corporeal punishment as provided hereinafter. . . .

**Sec. 3.** . . . No negro shall be permitted to rent or keep a house within said parish. Any negro violating this provision shall be immediately ejected and compelled to find an employer; and any person who shall rent, or give the use of any house to any negro, in violation of this section, shall pay a fine of five dollars for each offence.

**Sec. 4.** . . . Every negro is required to be in the regular service of some white person, or former owner, who shall be held responsible for the conduct of said negro. But said employer or former owner may permit said negro to hire his own time by special permission in writing, which permission shall not extend over seven days at any one time. . . .

**Sec. 5.** . . . No public meetings or congregations of negroes shall be allowed within said parish after sunset; but such public meetings and congregations may be held between the hours of sunrise and sunset, by the special permission in writing of the captain of patrol, within whose beat such meetings shall take place. . . .

**Sec. 6.** . . . No negro shall be permitted to preach, exhort, or otherwise declaim to congregations of colored people, without a special permission in writing from the president of the police jury. . . .

**Sec. 7.** . . . No negro who is not in the military service shall be allowed to carry fire-arms, or any kind of weapons, within the parish, without the special written permission of his employers, approved and indorsed by the nearest and most convenient chief of patrol. . . .

**Sec. 8.** . . . No negro shall sell, barter, or exchange any articles of merchandise or traffic within said parish without the special written permission of his employer, specifying the article of sale, barter or traffic. . . .

**Sec. 9.** . . . Any negro found drunk, within the said parish shall pay a fine of five dollars, or in default thereof work five days on the public road, or suffer corporeal punishment as hereinafter provided.

**Sec. 11.** . . . It shall be the duty of every citizen to act as a police officer for the detection of offences and the apprehension of offenders, who shall be immediately handed over to the proper captain or chief of patrol. . . .



## Station 6

## Rise of Ku Klux Klan During Reconstruction

During Reconstruction, white supremacists were conducting a reign of terror throughout the South. In outright defiance of the Republican-led federal government, Southern Democrats formed organizations that violently intimidated blacks and Republicans who tried to win political power.

The most prominent of these groups, the Ku Klux Klan, was formed in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1865. Originally founded as a social club for former Confederate soldiers, the Klan evolved into a terrorist organization. It would be responsible for thousands of deaths, and would help to weaken the political power of Southern blacks and Republicans.

Racist activity in the South often took the form of riots that targeted blacks and equal-minded Republicans. In 1866, a quarrel between whites and black ex-soldiers erupted into a full-fledged riot in Memphis, Tennessee. White policemen assisted the mobs in their violent rampage through the black sections of town. By the time the violence ended, 46 people were dead, 70 more were wounded, and numerous churches and schools had been burned. Just two months later, on July 30, a similar outbreak of violence erupted in New Orleans, Louisiana. This time, a white mob attacked the attendees of a black suffrage convention, killing 37 blacks and three whites who allied with them.

In this violent atmosphere, the Ku Klux Klan grew in size and strength. By 1868, the Klan had evolved into a hooded terrorist organization that its members called "The Invisible Empire of the South." The reorganized Klan's first leader, or "Grand Wizard," was Nathan Bedford Forrest, who had been a Confederate general during the Civil War.

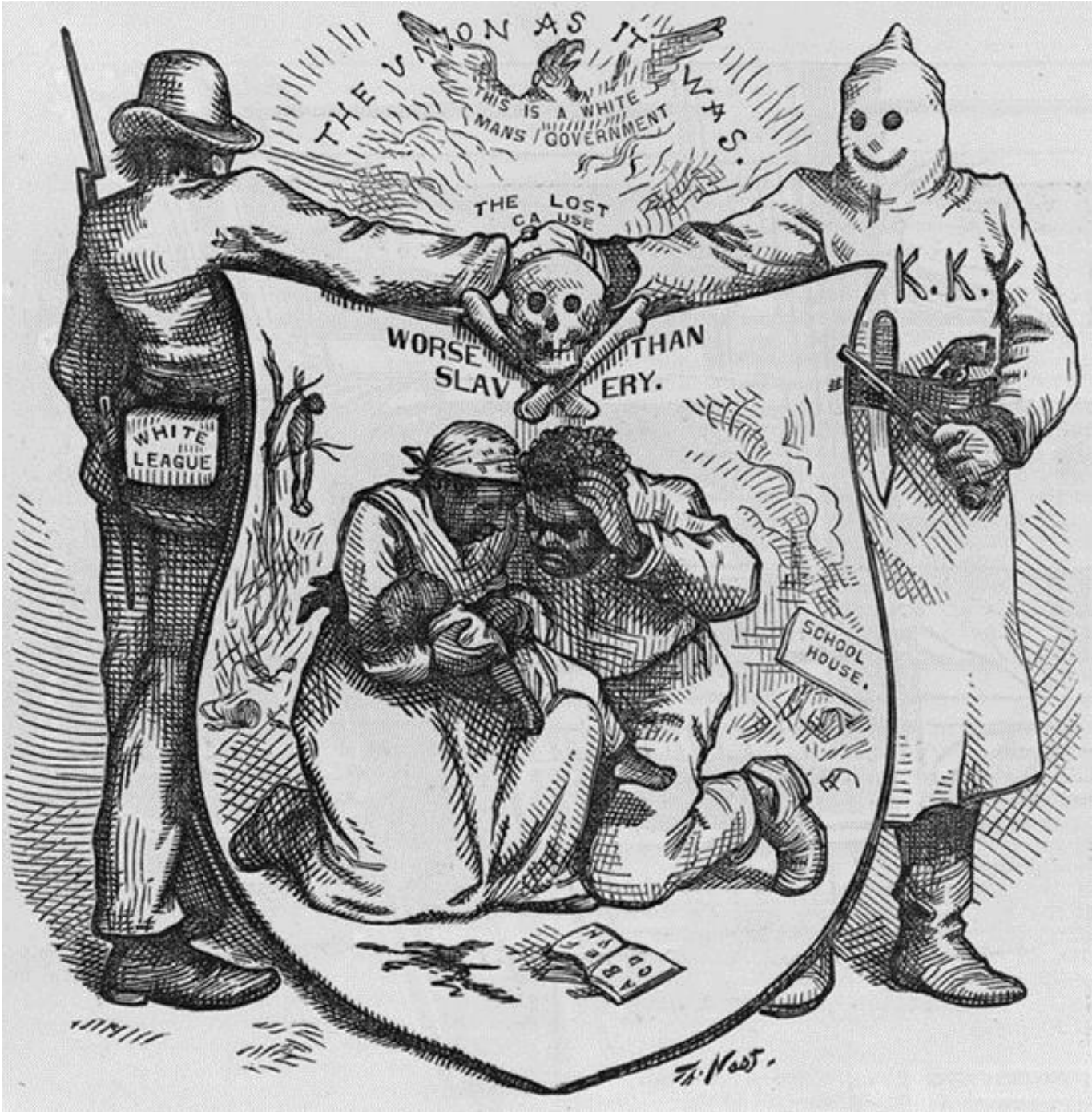
White Southerners from all classes of society joined the Klan's ranks. In the name of preserving law and order in a white-dominated society, Klansmen punished newly freed blacks for a variety of reasons, many of which were seemingly random. They whipped the teachers of freedmen's schools and burnt their schoolhouses. But first and foremost, the Klan sought to do away with Republican influence in the South by terrorizing and murdering its party leaders and all those who voted for it.

In the time leading up to the 1868 presidential election, the Klan's activities picked up in speed and brutality. The election, which pitted Republican Ulysses S. Grant against Democrat Horatio Seymour, was crucial. Republicans would continue programs that prevented Southern whites from gaining political control in their states. Klan members knew that given the chance, the blacks in their communities would vote Republican.

Across the South, the Klan and other terrorist groups used brutal violence to intimidate Republican voters. In Kansas, over 2,000 murders were committed in connection with the election. In Georgia, the number of threats and beatings was even higher. And in Louisiana, 1000 blacks were killed as the election neared. In those three states, Democrats won decisive victories at the polls.

The Klan's actions proved to the North that the South had not learned its lesson in the Civil War and that harsher laws were needed to protect Southern blacks. Between 1870 and 1871, Congress passed the Enforcement Acts, which made it a crime to interfere with registration, voting, officeholding, or jury service of blacks. Despite the intentions of the law, only 1/5<sup>th</sup> of all accused violators were convicted.

Thomas Nast. "The Union as it was / The Lost Cause, worse than slavery." 1874



## Station 7

## Election of 1876 & Compromise of 1877

In the Presidential election of 1876, the Republicans nominated Rutherford B Hayes, then the governor of Ohio, while the Democrats nominated Samuel Tilden, the governor of New York at that time. The initial election returns pointed to a Tilden victory for the Democrats, but Tilden had only captured 184 out of the 185 necessary electoral votes needed to win. He had an advantage of over 250,000 votes in the popular vote.

Republicans refused to accept this result. They accused the Democrats of using physical intimidation and bribery to discourage African Americans from voting in the South. The final outcome of the election depended on the results in four states that had disputed their results—Florida, Louisiana, Oregon, and South Carolina.

To resolve this dispute, Congress established an electoral commission made up of 5 U.S. representatives, 5 Senators, and 5 Supreme Court Justices. When the electoral commission made their ruling on the disputed votes, they awarded all the disputed elector votes to Rutherford B. Hayes and the Republicans. This produced outrage from the Democrats, and many feared it would provoke another Civil War.

In order to reach a solution that made both Democrats and Republicans happy, both sides met in February 1877 at Washington D.C. Democratic leaders accepted Hayes's election in exchange for Republican promises to withdraw federal troops from the South, eliminate the 5 military districts in the South, provide federal funding for internal improvements in the South, and name a prominent Southerner to the president's cabinet. When the federal troops were withdrawn, the Republican-led governments in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina collapsed, bringing Reconstruction to a formal end.

Under the so-called Compromise of 1877, the national government would no longer intervene in southern affairs. This would allow the South to continue policies of racial segregation and denial of African Americans from voting without interference from the federal government.

In order to prevent African Americans from exercising their right to vote, local Southern election officials used methods such as poll taxes (where voters would have to pay a tax in order to cast their ballot, hurting the poor's inability to vote), literacy tests (mandating that voters must take and pass a reading test; many former slaves uneducated, therefore could not read or write), and enacting the grandfather clause (those voters whose grandfather voted would be exempt from poll taxes and/or literacy tests – allowed poor, uneducated whites to still be able to vote).