

Chapter 22: Reconstruction

1. Readmission

Congress vs. Lincoln

Lincoln believed that setting the policy for readmitting seceded states was his job. In December 1863, he proposed his so-called “ten percent plan” that allowed rebel states to return to the Union if ten percent of voters took a loyalty oath.

Congress believed Lincoln was too lenient and rejected his plan. In 1864, Congress issued the Wade-Davis Bill that required a majority of people in rebelling states to take a loyalty oath. Lincoln vetoed the **bill**.

Despite their differences, both sides could work together. At Lincoln’s urging, the Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment in January 1865 making slavery illegal in the United States. Now, three-fourths of the states needed to ratify the **amendment** to make it legal.

Johnson’s Plan

After Lincoln’s death, Andrew Johnson became president. Like Lincoln, Johnson believed that the reconstruction of the South was his job alone. While Congress was out of session, Johnson made the policy for the Southern states to return to the Union.

1. Johnson offered **amnesty** to most Southerners who took a loyalty oath.
2. Johnson appointed governors for each Southern state to oversee the creation of new state governments.
3. Each state needed to declare secession illegal, ratify the 13th Amendment, and cancel all Confederate debts.

Some Southern states met all of the demands while others failed to meet all

the requirements. All southern states began to pass Black Codes limiting the rights of African Americans. In reality, under Johnson’s plan, the South was trying to return to the way it was before the war.

Congress vs. Johnson

When Congress came back into session they rejected Johnson’s reconstruction plan and moved to take control of Reconstruction. Johnson vetoed several programs and **civil rights** bills to help African Americans. This created open hostility between Congress and the president.

Radical Republicans took the lead in Congress. They overrode several presidential vetoes and impeached President Johnson resulting in taking power and Reconstruction away from the president.

Congress set up its own plan for reconstruction. The South was divided into five sections controlled by the military. For readmission to the Union, Congress had to approve the new state governments and states had to approve the 14th Amendment and some states needed to approve the 15th Amendment as well. By 1870, all the Southern states had returned to the Union.

13th Amendment:

Slavery is illegal in the United States.

14th Amendment:

Laws must apply to and protect everyone.

15th Amendment:

African American men have the right to vote.

2. Reconstruction Fails

Republicans

African Americans voted overwhelmingly for Republicans. In the South, Republicans controlled most state governments with hundreds of African Americans being elected to office. Republicans spent money on education, road building, railroad construction, and other improvements. Laws passed that fought against discrimination. African Americans began to see changes they only dreamed of a few years before.

Ku Klux Klan

The white racist South reacted violently toward the idea that African Americans could become equal to whites. Several organizations formed for the purpose of keeping the African American populations in poverty and out of power.

In 1867, former Confederate officers formed the Ku Klux Klan. Their leader, Nathan Bedford Forrest, sought to use intimidation, violence, and even murder to keep African Americans and white Republicans away from the polls. This resulted in the Democrats coming back into power in many Southern states. Terrorism reigned in many parts of the South for years.

On April 20, 1871, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Ku Klux Klan Bill. The army and federal marshals arrested over 600 suspects and put them in jail. Trials began in November and lasted through December. Most convicted Klan members received no more than six months in jail, but the Klan essentially ceased to exist until it came back after World War I.

Unequal

By the 1870s, southern white Democrats had taken control of their state governments. Black Codes deprived African Americans of their civil rights. They could not vote, hold office, or live in certain places. Jim Crow laws enforced **segregation** that separated blacks and whites in public places. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation was legal as long as the races were separate but equal. African Americans constantly suffered in less than equal conditions.

3. Reconstruction Ends

Election of 1876

In 1873, the economy began to fail. People lost jobs as businesses closed. Suddenly, people in the North cared more about their own problems than the problems of racism in the South.

In the presidential election of 1876, a scandal broke out over election fraud. Both Republicans and Democrats charged each other with changing votes. Both sides claimed victory. As tempers rose, some Democrats called for another civil war unless the election commission declared their candidate Samuel J. Tilden the winner. Republicans countered that Rutherford B. Hayes actually won the presidency.

Behind the scenes, politicians worked out a deal. The Republican candidate Hayes became the president. In exchange, Congress removed the remaining Union soldiers from the South.

Reconstruction came to an end but it failed to solve equality issues between blacks and whites. Civil rights for African Americans remained elusive.