

The Second Founding and the Reconstruction of American
Citizenship:
Revolution, Reaction, and Reform in The Fourteenth Amendment,
Southern Resistance, and Its Enduring Civil Rights Legacy

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This year's NHD theme, "Revolution, Reaction, Reform in History," guided me to the Reconstruction era and the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, a defining moment when the United States sought to reconstruct freedom, citizenship, and equality after the Civil War. The Amendment was a revolutionary legal transformation: it enshrined birthright citizenship, guaranteed equal protection and due process, and established the federal government as the guarantor of civil rights. Its passage provoked immediate reaction. Southern legislatures enacted Black Codes, paramilitary groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and White League terrorized African Americans, and courts, through rulings like the Slaughterhouse Cases (1873) and *United States v. Cruikshank* (1876), limited federal authority. Over time, its principles enabled reform through landmark legislation such as the Civil Rights Act (1964) and the Voting Rights Act (1965), and Supreme Court decisions including *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015). I chose this topic because it exemplifies the cycle of revolutionary change, reaction, and reform, highlighting the ongoing struggle to define freedom and equality in America.

My research combined primary sources, historical archives, and secondary scholarship. Key primary sources included John Bingham's congressional speeches, Thaddeus Stevens' legislative debates, and contemporary newspaper accounts. Bingham declared, "The Constitution was made for the people, not the states," articulating a national vision of citizenship, while Stevens stressed the urgency of protecting freedpeople from state-sanctioned oppression. Newspapers revealed the human stakes of Reconstruction, from harassment and economic coercion to the establishment of schools and mutual aid societies. Secondary sources, including

Eric Foner's "Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution" and Joanne Freeman's analyses of congressional leadership, provided interpretation and context on political, legal, and social dimensions. Together, these sources allowed me to connect constitutional theory to the lived experiences of freedpeople.

I organized my project as a paper to present a clear, nuanced argument. A detailed outline divided the essay into the postwar crisis, drafting of the Fourteenth Amendment, Southern resistance, enforcement challenges, and its enduring legacy. Integrating speeches, debates, newspapers, and archival accounts linked reform to the everyday struggles of freedpeople, showing both the human cost of resistance and the lasting power of constitutional protections. My argument is that the Fourteenth Amendment was a revolutionary redefinition of citizenship; however, its promise was obstructed by organized Southern opposition and uneven federal enforcement. Its principles endured, forming the foundation for later reform, inspiring civil rights legislation, and shaping generations of social and legal movements. Freedpeople's activism, through voting, officeholding, education, and community organization, demonstrated that liberty must be actively claimed and defended.

This topic is historically significant because it illustrates how revolutions provoke reaction, why reform requires persistence, and how legal change must be enforced to protect rights. It remains relevant today, as debates over voting rights, systemic inequality, and civil liberties echo Reconstruction's struggles. Studying leaders, speeches, and records revealed that freedom and equality are never guaranteed; they must be claimed, defended, and continually reimagined. Reconstruction shows that a nation's ideals are as strong as its enforcement for all citizens.

Introduction: A Nation in Ruins, Freedom Without Protection

Freedom came to the South amid devastation. Railroads lay twisted and unusable, cities such as Richmond and Atlanta smoldered in ruins, and agricultural production collapsed.¹ Confederate currency was worthless, state governments barely functioned, and millions faced hunger and uncertainty.² For formerly enslaved African Americans, danger extended far beyond economic ruin. Emancipation severed slavery but offered no immediate protection against social, political, and economic systems designed to preserve white supremacy.³ Across the former Confederacy, coercion and violence swiftly replaced slavery as mechanisms of control. Southern legislatures enacted Black Codes criminalizing unemployment, restricting movement, and forcing freedpeople into exploitative labor contracts.⁴ In Mississippi, African Americans had to sign annual labor agreements or face arrest; in South Carolina, most occupations outside agriculture and domestic service were barred. Freedom existed on paper, but daily life remained precarious.⁵ Slavery's collapse exposed the prewar Constitution's limits. Under federalism, states retained authority over civil rights, a disastrous system when former Confederates regained power. Southern courts refused to recognize Black testimony, local officials ignored racial violence⁶, and white vigilante groups enforced obedience through intimidation.⁷ Freedpeople

¹ Stevenson, Bryan. "Reconstruction in America." *EJI Reports*, 2020, eji.org/report/reconstruction-in-america/.

² A History of Racial Injustice. "Oct. 15, 1883 | Supreme Court Strikes Down Civil Rights Act; Permits Segregation for Generations." *Calendar.eji.org*, 2022, calendar.eji.org/racial-injustice/oct/15.

³ Stanford University. "Civil Rights Act of 1964 Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute." *Kinginstitute.stanford.edu*, 2 July 1964, kinginstitute.stanford.edu/civil-rights-act-1964.

⁴ Backman, Daniel. "A Vast Labor Bureau": The Freedmen's Bureau and the Administration of Countervailing Black Labor Power. 2023, www.yalejreg.com/wp-content/uploads/Daniel-Backman-The-Freedmens-Bureau-and-the-Administration-of-Countervailing-Black-Labor-Power.pdf.

⁵ Beauregard, Erving E. "John A. Bingham and the Fourteenth Amendment." *The Historian*, vol. 50, no. 1, Wiley, 1987, pp. 67–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/24446951>. JSTOR.

⁶ "Newspapers - Research Guides at Library of Congress." *Loc.gov*, 2026, guides.loc.gov/newspapers. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁷ Bingham, John. Congressional Globe. www.justfacts.com/document/14th_amendment_john_bingham_speech.pdf.

attempting to reunite families, secure education, or negotiate wages faced beatings, arrests, and expulsion.⁸ As one freedman observed, emancipation had “turned us loose to starve,” not because liberty lacked meaning, but because it lacked protection.⁹ Although the Fourteenth Amendment redefined citizenship and guaranteed equality for formerly enslaved African Americans, organized Southern resistance and inconsistent federal enforcement undermined its promise; nevertheless, its principles endured, forming the foundation for later civil rights reforms.

Despite these dangers, African Americans asserted freedom with remarkable determination. As Frederick Douglass observed, “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will,” capturing the active struggle required to claim liberty and rights.¹⁰ They established churches, founded schools, and organized mutual aid networks. General Oliver O. Howard of the Freedmen’s Bureau¹¹ emphasized, “We must not rest until the children of the freedmen can read, write, and enjoy the protection of law,” underscoring the central role of education and federal oversight in securing freedom. Their actions demonstrated that emancipation was not a passive gift but an ongoing struggle to secure citizenship, equality, and protection under the law. Yet these assertions intensified white resistance. To many Southern whites, Black political participation threatened social order and labor control.¹² The Civil War

⁸ Boucher, Alex. “Research Guides: The American Civil War: Primary Sources: Diaries, Letters, Memoirs, & Oral Histories.” *Guides.lib.ua.edu*, 14 Jan. 2026, guides.lib.ua.edu/c.php?g=874937&p=6329745.

⁹ USC Libraries. “Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers | USC Libraries.” *USC Libraries*, 2025, libraries.usc.edu/databases/chronicling-america-historic-american-newspapers. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

¹⁰ Bowdoin Library. “Collection: Oliver Otis Howard Papers | Bowdoin College Special Collections & Archives.” *Bowdoin.edu*, 2026, archivesspace.bowdoin.edu/repositories/2/resources/772. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

¹¹ “Freedmen’s Bureau Records: An Overview.” *National Archives*, 15 Aug. 2016, www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/freedmens-bureau-records.html.

¹² Zinn Education Project. “Black Reconstruction in America.” *Zinn Education Project*, 2019, www.zinnedproject.org/materials/black-reconstruction-america/.

had destroyed slavery, but it had not redefined citizenship or secured equal protection under the law. As violence, discriminatory legislation, and judicial indifference spread across the South, many Republicans in Congress concluded that only a fundamental transformation of constitutional authority could preserve freedom. Reconstruction therefore became more than an effort to rebuild the South; it became a struggle over who possessed rights, protection, and political power in postwar America.¹³

A Constitutional Revolution: Redefining Citizenship and Rights and The Fourteenth Amendment

As the Civil War drew to a close in 1865, Congress confronted a constitutional crisis: emancipation had freed millions of African Americans while leaving unresolved whether the federal government possessed the authority to protect their citizenship and civil rights against hostile state governments. Reports from Southern states documented Black Codes, vagrancy laws, and systematic intimidation designed to maintain white supremacy.¹⁴ In cities such as Charleston, Richmond, and New Orleans, freedpeople attempting to negotiate wages, testify in court, or reunite with families faced harassment, imprisonment, and violence.¹⁵ Northern reformers debated reintegration and freedpeople's protection, recognizing that abolishing slavery alone would not resolve a long-standing constitutional crisis.¹⁶

¹³ Civics Supreme Court History. "Civil Rights Cases | History of the Supreme Court." *Supremecourthistory.org*, 2025, civics.supremecourthistory.org/article/civil-rights-cases/.

¹⁴ Congress.Gov. "Browse the Congressional Globe by Date." Congress.gov, 2026, www.congress.gov/congressional-globe/40th-congress/browse-by-date. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

¹⁵ Cornell Law School. "14th Amendment." *Legal Information Institute*, Cornell Law School, 17 May 2018, www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv.

¹⁶ DBVa Library of Virginia. "Racial Violence Reported in Norfolk Newspapers, 1866 · Document Bank of Virginia." Virginia.gov, 2026, www.lva.virginia.gov/collections/educator-resources/dbva/items/show/302. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

Radical Republicans like Representative John Bingham of Ohio emerged as architects of a constitutional solution.¹⁷ In spring 1866, during debates over the Civil Rights Act, Bingham argued that citizenship must be defined nationally. On May 30, he asserted that no state could deny fundamental rights to anyone born in the United States, emphasizing that civil and political liberties must not depend on individual states.¹⁸ Bingham argued that without federal enforcement, emancipation would remain vulnerable to state oppression and racial violence, reducing freedom to a promise without protection. Senator Thaddeus Stevens of Pennsylvania framed emancipation as an incomplete victory.¹⁹ In June 1866, he argued that ending slavery removed chains of bondage but left social and political hierarchies intact. He pressed for guarantees that African Americans could vote²⁰, own property, testify in court, and enjoy equal protection, warning that Congress could not rely on Southern legislatures, which had already enacted Black Codes and discriminatory policies.²¹

Throughout the summer, the Joint Committee on Reconstruction drafted constitutional language to secure these rights. On July 16, 1866, the Committee issued a report detailing provisions to protect citizenship, prohibit state abridgment of rights, and grant Congress

¹⁷ Duke University Libraries. "Slave Letters | Duke University Libraries." Library.duke.edu, 2026, library.duke.edu/rubenstein/research/guides/slaveletters. Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

¹⁸ Evans, Farrell. "How Jim Crow-Era Laws Suppressed the African American Vote for Generations." HISTORY, 13 May 2021, www.history.com/articles/jim-crow-laws-black-vote.

¹⁹ Facing History & Ourselves. "Black Officeholders in the South | Facing History and Ourselves." *Www.facinghistory.org*, 2025, www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/black-officeholders-south. Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

²⁰ Tyson Darling, Marsha J. "A Right Deferred: African American Voter Suppression after Reconstruction | Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History." *Www.gilderlehrman.org*, 2018, www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/right-deferred-african-american-voter-suppression-after-reconstruction.

²¹ Federal Judicial Center. "U.S. V. Cruikshank | Federal Judicial Center." *Fjc.gov*, 2000, www.fjc.gov/history/timeline/us-v-cruikshank.

enforcement authority.²² The draft ensured African Americans could participate fully in civic life, attend schools, and enter lawful occupations.²³ By codifying these protections, the Committee embedded equality directly into the Constitution. After passing Congress on June 13, 1866, the Fourteenth Amendment required approval by three-fourths of the states.²⁴ By mid-1867, military Reconstruction divided former Confederate states into districts to supervise ratification and African American political participation.²⁵ Alabama, Georgia, and Louisiana were among the first to submit documents, followed by North Carolina, South Carolina, and others. On July 9, 1868, the amendment was certified, establishing a national definition of citizenship, prohibiting state abridgment of rights on the basis of race, and guaranteeing equal protection.

Its passage had immediate consequences. Freedmen voted in Southern states, Republican governments implemented public education and civil rights measures, and African Americans entered state legislatures in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Mississippi.²⁶ Leaders such as Robert Smalls, a former slave and advocate for Black voting rights²⁷ and education in South Carolina, and P.B.S. Pinchback, the first African American governor in Louisiana, exemplified these

²² Foner, Eric. "Rooted in Reconstruction: The First Wave of Black Congressmen." *Www.thenation.com*, 15 Oct. 2008, www.thenation.com/article/archive/rooted-reconstruction-first-wave-black-congressmen/.

²³ Hagley. "Robert Smalls and the Civil War: Fighting for the Union." Hagley.org, 2020, www.hagley.org/research/digital-exhibits/fighting-union?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22936104476&gbraid=0AAAAAotPnmPll8-yRSsBreBSIPLn-7ea9&gclid=CjwKCAiAssfLBhBDEiwAcLpwfnJ72Migo7tqHud3_f-Y5qHZNjainNwV7WLjYlk-bUmGhsRpPAVb_xoCekAQAvD_BwE. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

²⁴ Hébert, Keith. *Historic Resource Study of African American Schools in the South, 1865–1900*. 2024, npshistory.com/publications/hrs-aa-s-schools.pdf.

²⁵ Howard University. "Correspondence | Oliver Otis Howard Collection | Howard University." *Howard.edu*, 2026, dh.howard.edu/ooh_corr/. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

²⁶ Identify Truth. "What Is the 14th Amendment in Simple Terms?" Identify Truth, 24 July 2025, www.identifytruth.org/post/what-is-the-14th-amendment-in-simple-terms?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22827031866&gbraid=0AAAAAoJAPzLH61Gh_T4RnyI3WS9ylik4X&gclid=CjwKCAiAssfLBhBDEiwAcLpwfstnhTVV EQy5rbQ8hm7kV5aD1nCsQTWwyGh_1xnN8IAnsV928PaPLBoCAtoQAvD_BwE. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

²⁷ "African American Voting Rights | Voters and Voting Rights | Presidential Elections and Voting in U.S. History | Classroom Materials at the Library of Congress | Library of Congress." *The Library of Congress*, 2015, www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/elections/voters/african-americans/.

breakthroughs.²⁸ Although Reconstruction governments faced growing opposition across the South, the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment marked a revolutionary transformation of the Constitution.²⁹ For the first time, citizenship and equal protection became national responsibilities rather than privileges left to individual states. The amendment therefore represented far more than a legal reform; it redefined the relationship between Americans and their government by establishing federal authority as the guarantor of civil rights.³⁰

Despite these challenges, the Fourteenth Amendment established enduring constitutional principles, becoming the foundation for civil rights litigation and federal enforcement of equality.³¹ Freedmen's persistence through voting, officeholding, forming mutual aid societies, and organizing armed patrols demonstrated that political participation and community defense were critical components of Reconstruction.³² The amendment's passage reflected the radical vision of its framers and the revolutionary moment in which it was born.³³

Reaction: Violence, Terror, Lawlessness, and the Collapse of Enforcement

²⁸ Injustice for Justice. "The Slaughterhouse Cases (1873)." Institute for Justice, 2021, ij.org/center-for-judicial-engagement/programs/victims-of-abdication/the-slaughterhouse-cases-1873/.

²⁹ Knoles, Lucia Z. "James Henry Hammond, 'Speech of Hon. James H. Hammond, of South Carolina, on the Admission of Kansas, under the Lecompton Constitution: Delivered in the Senate of the United States, March 4, 1858,' 1858." [Americanantiquarian.org](http://americanantiquarian.org), Feb. 2006, <http://mac110.assumption.edu/aas/default.html>.

³⁰ Library of Congress. "Congressional Globe | Debates of Congress | Articles and Essays | a Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates 1774-1875 | Digital Collections | Library of Congress." The Library of Congress, 2015, www.loc.gov/collections/century-of-lawmaking/articles-and-essays/debates-of-congress/congressional-globe/.

³¹ Louisiana Secretary of State. "P. B. S. Pinchback." [Www.sos.la.gov](http://www.sos.la.gov), 2026, www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/AboutLouisiana/LouisianaGovernors1861-1877/Pages/PBSPinchback.aspx. Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

³² Massachusetts Historical Society. "William Lloyd Garrison Papers, 1833-1882." *Masshist.org*, 2012, www.masshist.org/collection-guides/view/fa0278.

³³ McPherson, Edward. "Mississippi Black Code, 1865 | the American Yawp Reader." *AmericanYawp.com*, 1865, www.americanyawp.com/reader/reconstruction/mississippi-black-code-1865/.

Stifling heat settled over the Southern states in the summer of 1865, but no force weighed more heavily on the newly freed than pervasive violence.³⁴ Freedmen traveling home found roads patrolled by armed vigilantes; towns such as Memphis and New Orleans saw nightfall bring raids and beatings.³⁵ In Mississippi, mobs forced Black laborers to accept annual contracts under threat of arrest for “vagrancy.” Southern sheriffs and officials, many former Confederate officers, sanctioned such abuses, turning law enforcement into instruments of oppression.³⁶ Could freedom survive when its guardians perpetuated terror? The federal response was hesitant. President Andrew Johnson’s leniency restored rights and property to ex-Confederates while leaving the formerly enslaved defenseless.³⁷ Southern legislatures across Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia codified Black Codes restricting movement, criminalizing unemployment, and confining African Americans to agricultural or domestic labor. Paramilitary groups such as the White League, Red Shirts, and Knights of the White Camelia attacked voters, teachers, and officeholders, often with local collusion. In South Carolina, militias punished freedpeople seeking higher wages; in Georgia, those organizing schools were publicly whipped.³⁸ Violence was not random but systematic, politically motivated, and often

³⁴ Moyer, Steve. “Remarkable Radical: Thaddeus Stevens.” National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), 2012, www.neh.gov/humanities/2012/novemberdecember/feature/remarkable-radical-thaddeus-stevens.

³⁵ National Archives. “14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: Civil Rights (1868).” National Archives, 2024, www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/14th-amendment.

³⁶ National Constitution Center. “Constitution 101 Resources - 12.5 Primary Source: John Bingham, One Country, One Constitution, One People (1866) | Constitution Center.” *National Constitution Center – Constitutioncenter.org*, 2021, constitutioncenter.org/education/classroom-resource-library/classroom/12.5-primary-source-john-bingham-one-country-one-constitution-one-people-1866.

³⁷ National Governors Association. “Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback.” *National Governors Association*, 2026, www.nga.org/governor/pinckney-benton-stewart-pinchback/. Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

³⁸ National Museum of African American History and Culture. “The Freedmen’s Bureau Records.” National Museum of African American History and Culture, 16 Sept. 2016, nmaahc.si.edu/explore/initiatives/freedmens-bureau-records.

protected by local authorities.³⁹ In February 1866, Senator Charles Sumner declared, “The people of the United States have emancipated a race, yet left them to the mercy of tyrants.” Thaddeus Stevens warned freedpeople could be reenslaved without federal protection, while John Bingham proclaimed, “The Constitution was made for the people, not the states,” emphasizing the necessity of a Second Founding.⁴⁰ They advocated the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and, ultimately, the Fourteenth Amendment to secure citizenship, rights, and federal enforcement.⁴¹

The summer and fall of 1866 saw a terrifying escalation. In Memphis, May 1-3, a white mob attacked Black neighborhoods, killing forty-six and wounding more than 200.⁴² Two weeks later, in New Orleans, mobs led by police, ex-Confederates, and paramilitary groups killed over thirty African Americans during the Mechanics’ Institute Riot, targeting Black legislators and unionists.⁴³ Freedmen recently registered to vote or holding office were hunted, revealing that political engagement itself triggered violence.⁴⁴ Military districts established under the Reconstruction Acts faced persistent local resistance and insufficient enforcement.⁴⁵ In Alabama, troops attempting to protect freedmen attending schools and churches were ambushed and

³⁹ Newspapers by Ancestry. “The Liberator.” *Newspapers.com*, 26 Jan. 1844, www.newspapers.com/paper/the-liberator/898/?locale=en-US. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁴⁰ Northwestern University. “Research Guides: Congressional Record: Debates of Congress.” Northwestern.edu, 2016, libguides.northwestern.edu/CR. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁴¹ Oyez. “Slaughter-House Cases.” *Oyez*, 2020, www.oyez.org/cases/1850-1900/83us36.

⁴² Radgowski, Jehan-Jones, and Poppy Kang. “‘The Escape of Robert Smalls: A Daring Voyage out of Slavery’ | Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History.” *Gilderlehrman.org*, 2026, www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/videos/escape-robert-smalls-daring-voyage-out-slavery?gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAssfLBhBDEiWAcLpwfny4qUweEYCVObQRh8t-47oadeWJCax96KRI9yLdxR6P6_aCvL038hoCwzcQAvD_BwE. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁴³ Rutgers University. “Snubbed Landmark: Why United States v. Cruikshank (1876) Belongs at the Heart of the American Constitutional Canon.” *Rutgers.edu*, 2025, scholarship.libraries.rutgers.edu/esploro/outputs/journalArticle/Snubbed-Landmark--Why-United-States/991031550036004646.

⁴⁴ Segregation in America. “From Slavery to Segregation | Equal Justice Initiative.” *Eji.org*, 2018, segregationinamerica.eji.org/report/from-slavery-to-segregation.html.

⁴⁵ Synapse. “This Date in UCSF History: The First Black Congressmen.” *UCSF Synapse*, 26 Feb. 2009, synapse.ucsf.edu/articles/2025/02/25/date-ucsf-history-first-black-congressmen.

intimidated.⁴⁶ In Louisiana, Klan operatives attacked federal officers supervising voter registration, revealing the weakness of civil enforcement.⁴⁷ Courts routinely refused Black testimony, overturned convictions of white perpetrators, or dismissed charges on technicalities.⁴⁸ In South Carolina, an 1868 trial revealed that a white mob could not be prosecuted because local juries “would not convict their own citizens.” Northern fatigue, compounded by the Panic of 1873, further weakened federal resolve, allowing violence and oppression to persist largely unchecked.⁴⁹

Amid these horrors, African Americans persevered. Freedpeople organized armed patrols in Beaufort and Charleston in 1867 and coordinated conventions across Louisiana to defend political participation.⁵⁰ Schools established by Northern aid societies, including the Freedmen’s Bureau, served over 1.5 million African Americans and partnered with the American Missionary Association and institutions such as Howard University to provide literacy, civic education⁵¹, and social support.⁵² Each voter registration, the arrival of a teacher in a rural schoolhouse, and a

⁴⁶ Teach Democracy. “The Southern Black Codes of 1865-66.” Teach Democracy, 17 Oct. 2025, teachdemocracy.org/online-lesson/the-southern-black-codes-of-1865-66/.

⁴⁷ Testa, Patrick, and Jhacova Williams. “Political Foundations of Racial Violence in the Post-Reconstruction South.” *Political Foundations of Racial Violence in the Post-Reconstruction South*, July 2025, <https://doi.org/10.3386/w34004>.

⁴⁸ The Historic New Orleans Collection. “1860s Field Reports Reveal the Hardships in Establishing African American Education.” *Hnoc.org*, 2025, hnoc.org/publishing/first-draft/1860s-field-reports-reveal-hardships-establishing-african-american.

⁴⁹ The University of North Carolina Press Blog. “‘Fake News’ and Racial Violence after the Civil War.” *UNC Press Blog*, 1 Sept. 2021, uncpressblog.com/2021/09/01/fake-news-and-racial-violence-after-the-civil-war/.

⁵⁰ U.S. Supreme Court. “Slaughterhouse Cases, 83 U.S. 36 (1872).” Justia Law, 2018, supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/83/36/.

⁵¹ University of Pennsylvania. “Harper’s Weekly Archives.” Upenn.edu, 2000, onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/webbin/serial?id=harpersweekly.

⁵² Valley of the Shadow. “Freedmen’s Bureau: Official Monthly Reports - the Aftermath - the Valley of the Shadow.” *Newamericanhistory.org*, 2026, valley.newamericanhistory.org/aftermath/freedmens-bureau/by-topic/official-monthly-reports. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

public meeting asserting rights challenged entrenched white supremacy.⁵³ Freedmen were elected to state legislatures in Louisiana, South Carolina, and Mississippi, participating in Reconstruction-era governments under military oversight. Leaders such as Robert Smalls and P. B. S. Pinchback demonstrated African Americans' active role in reshaping Southern political life.⁵⁴ Yet these gains remained vulnerable to violence, judicial resistance, and declining federal enforcement, revealing Reconstruction's central weakness: constitutional rights without sustained enforcement remained fragile.⁵⁵

By 1868, violent reaction made the pattern clear: paramilitary intimidation, legal obstruction, and state-sanctioned coercion systematically undermined Southern enforcement of civil rights.⁵⁶ By the late 1860s, it had become increasingly clear that constitutional guarantees meant little without consistent federal enforcement.⁵⁷ By the mid-1870s, Reconstruction governments faced mounting resistance from paramilitary violence, judicial retrenchment, and declining Northern commitment, weakening federal enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment and allowing white supremacist governments to regain power across the South.⁵⁸ Radical Republicans, alarmed by Southern intransigence and reports from Freedmen's Bureau agents,

⁵³ Washington University in St. Louis Arts & Sciences. "What Historical Newspapers Can Reveal about the Spread of Racial Terror." Department of Sociology, 31 Oct. 2023, sociology.wustl.edu/news/what-historical-newspapers-can-reveal-about-spread-racial-terror.

⁵⁴ Zinn Education Project. "The Other '68: Black Power during Reconstruction." *Zinn Education Project*, 14 Aug. 2018, www.zinnproject.org/if-we-knew-our-history/black-power-during-reconstruction/.

⁵⁵ "African American Records: Freedmen's Bureau." *National Archives*, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 19 Sept. 2016, www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/freedmens-bureau.

⁵⁶ "The Reconstruction Amendments: Official Documents as Social History | Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History." *Www.gilderlehrman.org*, 2004, www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/essays/reconstruction-amendments-official-documents-social-history.

⁵⁷ "U.S. Senate: African Americans." *Senate.gov*, 16 Sept. 2024, www.senate.gov/artandhistory/senate-stories/african-americans.htm.

⁵⁸ Butler University. "The Policy of Intimidation Had Been so Successfully Managed That Many Colored Men Kept Away from the Polls": Violence in the Reconstruction Era South." *Butler.edu*, 2026, digitalcommons.butler.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1547&context=ugtheses. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

recognized that only enforceable guarantees could protect liberty.⁵⁹ Legislative and judicial responses, culminating in the Fourteenth Amendment, the Reconstruction Acts, and the Civil Rights Act of 1870, sought to transform fragile wartime victories into durable protections, shaping the legal and political landscape of Reconstruction.⁶⁰

Rebuilding Through Reform: Education, Legal Protection, and the Ongoing Struggle for Liberty

Even as Congress sought to secure African Americans' freedom, the nation faced a deeper challenge: turning rights on paper into reality.⁶¹ Thousands of freedmen endured hunger, unemployment, and the constant threat of violence. Even as violence and political resistance weakened Reconstruction across the South, reformers and federal officials continued attempting to transform emancipation into lasting citizenship, legal protection, and educational opportunity.⁶² Northern compromise and retreat further weakened federal enforcement, showing that emancipation alone could not guarantee liberty.⁶³ Central to Reconstruction were reformers and federal agents, most notably the Freedmen's Bureau, which assisted 1.5 million African

⁵⁹ Byman, Daniel. "White Supremacy, Terrorism, and the Failure of Reconstruction in the United States." *International Security*, vol. 46, no. 1, 19 July 2021, pp. 53–103. MIT Press Direct, direct.mit.edu/isec/article/46/1/53/102853/White-Supremacy-Terrorism-and-the-Failure-of, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00410.

⁶⁰ Byun, Joshua, and Hyunku Kwon. "Black Troops, White Rage, and Political Violence in the Postbellum American South." *American Political Science Review*, 14 Mar. 2025, pp. 1–20, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0003055424001187>. Accessed 4 June 2025.

⁶¹ C. Vann Woodward. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Oxford; New York, Oxford University Press, 2002.

⁶² Civics for Life and Sandra Day O'Connor Institute. *Voting Rights Act of 1965*. 2022, civicsforlife.org/voting-rights-act-of-1965/?utm_term=&utm_campaign=CFL+App+2026&utm_source=adwords&utm_medium=ppc&hsa_acc=2833943392&hsa_cam=23485849150&hsa_grp=&hsa_ad=&hsa_src=x&hsa_tgt=&hsa_kw=&hsa_mt=&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_ver=3&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=23481209192&gbraid=0AAAAACWbQChEGbLsElfksk-NWsqc3jTjE&gclid=Cj0KCOiA1czLBhDhARIsAIEc7ugWUobUwIDXjttbY5fXX5N4iT2C4wj7DT2a9jp-ALQ41UQb86WlgzQaAojtEALw_wcB.

⁶³ Colby, Thomas. *Originalism and the Ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment*. 2020.

Americans through legal aid, education, and support for labor contracts.⁶⁴ Bureau agents, including General Oliver O. Howard, mediated disputes, prevented exploitation, and secured fair wages.⁶⁵ Teachers, Black and white, traveled into hostile rural areas to instruct children and adults in literacy, arithmetic, and civic responsibility.⁶⁶ Partnerships with organizations such as the American Missionary Association and institutions like Howard University⁶⁷ transformed education into a cornerstone of freedom.⁶⁸ These reforms reflected the Reconstruction belief that freedom required education, legal protection, and access to citizenship.⁶⁹

Reforms extended beyond classrooms.⁷⁰ The Reconstruction Acts of 1867 and the Civil Rights Act of 1870 reorganized Southern governments, enforced voting rights, and stationed federal troops to guard elections and counter white supremacist terror, including attacks by the Ku Klux Klan⁷¹ and local militias.⁷² Despite resistance, African Americans voted in large

⁶⁴ Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. Fifty Years of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 – Progress, Problems and the Way Forward. Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, 3 July 2014.

⁶⁵ Dennis, Alexis C., et al. “The Development, Evolution, and Maintenance of Structural Racism for the Study of Health Inequities: An Expanded Framework for Asian, Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, and White Americans.” *Social Science & Medicine*, 9 July 2025, p. 118383, [www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0277953625007142](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2025.118383), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2025.118383>.

⁶⁶ Downs, Gregory P., and Kate Masur. *The Era of Reconstruction 1861-1900: A National Historic Landmarks Theme Study*. 2021.

⁶⁷ The Village Method. “What Can Educators Learn from the Reconstruction Era?” *The Village Method*, 19 Dec. 2022,

thevillagemethod.org/educators-learn-from-the-reconstruction-era/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22869975281&gbraid=0AAAAACVYYMBaYt_r07tQsf4uRKU1CtRGA&gclid=Cj0KCQiA1czLBhDhARIsAIEc7ugh5gmdYdlxUGx5fhNW0tKgGydnP-i06jmpe4wYy3PYJ1vaCE8nOIEaAqUkEALw_wcB.

⁶⁸ EBSCO Knowledge Advantage. “Analysis: Thaddeus Stevens: Speech to Congress | Research Starters | EBSCO Research.” EBSCO, 2021, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/analysis-thaddeus-stevens-speech-congress.

⁶⁹ Facing History & Ourselves. “South Carolina 'Red Shirts' Battle Plan (1876) | Facing History & Ourselves.” *Www.facinghistory.org*, 2021, www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/south-carolina-red-shirts-battle-plan-1876.

⁷⁰ Foner, Eric. “Eric Foner Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877.” New Jersey State Library, 2023, www.njstatelib.org/research_library/new_jersey_resources/highlights/african_american_history_curriculum/unit_7_reconstruction_era/unfinished_revolution/.

⁷¹ Silverbrook, Julie. “The Ku Klux Klan and Violence at the Polls.” *Bill of Rights Institute*, 2024, billofrightsinstitute.org/essays/the-ku-klux-klan-and-violence-at-the-polls.

⁷² Greenberger, Michael, and Jasmine Carrera Smith. “Federal Enforcement and Black Political Representation: Evidence from Reconstruction and the Voting Rights Act.” *The Journal of Race Ethnicity and Politics*, 21 May 2025, pp. 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2025.33>.

numbers, held office, and reshaped local and state governments. Freedmen's schools expanded while legal precedents laid groundwork for future civil rights protections.⁷³ Reconstruction represented a Second Founding, a constitutional transformation redefining citizenship and equality.⁷⁴ Yet Northern fatigue, political compromise, and the eventual withdrawal of federal troops in 1877 allowed white supremacist governments to reverse many gains, ushering in Jim Crow⁷⁵ segregation⁷⁶, disenfranchisement, and renewed violence.⁷⁷

Although Reconstruction ultimately collapsed under the weight of white supremacist violence, judicial retrenchment, and waning Northern commitment⁷⁸ The Fourteenth Amendment permanently transformed the Constitution.⁷⁹ Supreme Court decisions⁸⁰ such as *Slaughter-House Cases* (1873)⁸¹, *United States v. Cruikshank* (1876), *Civil Rights Cases* (1883), and *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) severely limited federal enforcement of civil rights during the late nineteenth century, allowing segregation and disenfranchisement to expand across the South. Nevertheless,

⁷³ History, Art & Archives: United States House of Representatives. "Reconstruction's New Order | US House of Representatives: History, Art & Archives." @USHouseHistory, 2020, history.house.gov/Exhibitions-and-Publications/BAIC/Historical-Essays/Fifteenth-Amendment/Reconstruction/.

⁷⁴ Library of Congress. "About This Collection | Chronicling America | Digital Collections | Library of Congress." Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA, 2010, www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling-america/about-this-collection/.

⁷⁵ Teaching American History. "The Strange Career of Jim Crow: Books That Changed the National Conversation." *Teaching American History*, 11 Mar. 2025, teachingamericanhistory.org/seminar/the-strange-career-of-jim-crow/. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁷⁶ The Charleston Museum. "The Charleston Museum | News and Events» "Waving the Bloody Shirt:" Reconstruction Era Violence and Political Identity." *Charlestonmuseum.org*, 2024, www.charlestonmuseum.org/news-events/waving-the-bloody-shirt-reconstruction-era-violence-and-political-identity/.

⁷⁷ Morand, Michael. "King, Woodward, and the Strange Career of Jim Crow." Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, 11 Jan. 2018, beinecke.library.yale.edu/article/king-woodward-and-strange-career-jim-crow.

⁷⁸ "The Liberator (Boston, Mass.) 1831-1865." *Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. 20540 USA*, 2021, www.loc.gov/item/sn84031524/.

⁷⁹ "Hugh Hefner Letter." *Hnoc.org*, 2026, hnoc.org/research-collections/collection-highlights/hugh-hefner-letter. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁸⁰ "Reconstruction and the Supreme Court | EBSCO." *EBSCO Information Services, Inc. | Www.ebsco.com*, 2022, www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/reconstruction-and-supreme-court.

⁸¹ "One Country, One Constitution, and One People. Speech of Hon. John A. Bingham, of Ohio, in the House of Representatives, February 28, 1866, in Support of the Proposed Amendment to Enforce the Bill of Rights." *The Library of Congress*, 2023, www.loc.gov/item/17030815/. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

the amendment's guarantees of citizenship and equal protection endured. Later decisions including *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954)⁸², *Loving v. Virginia* (1967)⁸³, and *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015)⁸⁴ invoked Reconstruction-era constitutional principles to challenge discrimination and expand civil rights. Legislative measures such as the Enforcement Acts of 1870-1871, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 similarly reflected the continuing struggle to transform the promises of Reconstruction into lasting legal protections.⁸⁵ The Revolution had begun, but it remained unfinished.⁸⁶

Conclusion

The story of Reconstruction is not one of simple triumph or defeat.⁸⁷ It is a story of hope shadowed by violence, of laws written in ink but tested in blood.⁸⁸ African Americans emerged from slavery into a world that promised liberty yet delivered fear, facing mobs, biased courts, and governments unwilling or unable to protect them.⁸⁹ Yet they persevered. Reconstruction

⁸² Turner, Ronald. "On *Brown v. Board of Education* and Discretionary Originalism." *Utah Law Review*, vol. 2015, no. 5, 2015, p. 4, dc.law.utah.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1248&context=ulr.

⁸³ Supreme Court Historical Society. "Loving v. Virginia | History of the Supreme Court." *Supremecourthistory.org*, 2024, civics.supremecourthistory.org/article/loving-v-virginia/.

⁸⁴ U.S. Supreme Court. "Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. 644 (2015)." *Justia Law*, 26 June 2015, supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/576/644/.

⁸⁵ "Speech Introducing the Fourteenth Amendment (1866) | Constitution Center." *National Constitution Center – Constitutioncenter.org*, 2023, constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/thaddeus-stevens-speech-introducing-the-fourteenth-amendment-1866.

⁸⁶ Museum of the American Revolution. "Historian Joanne Freeman to Discuss New Book on Congressional Violence and How It Helped Spark Civil War, Oct. 18." *Museum of the American Revolution*, 2018, www.amrevmuseum.org/press-releases/historian-joanne-freeman-to-discuss-new-book-on-congressional-violence-and-how-it-helped-spark-civil-war-oct-18. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁸⁷ NAACP. "Voting Rights Act of 1965 | NAACP." *Naacp.org*, NAACP, 2023, naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/legislative-milestones/voting-rights-act-1965.

⁸⁸ National Archives. "Civil Rights Act (1964)." *National Archives*, The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, 8 Feb. 2022, www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/civil-rights-act.

⁸⁹ National Constitution Center. "One Country, One Constitution, One People (1866) | Constitution Center." *National Constitution Center – Constitutioncenter.org*, 2017, constitutioncenter.org/the-constitution/historic-document-library/detail/john-bingham-one-country-one-constitution-one-people-1866.

revealed that constitutional rights were meaningless without enforcement. African Americans fought to transform emancipation into citizenship, education, political participation, and legal equality even as violence and political resistance threatened to destroy those gains.⁹⁰ The reforms of Reconstruction, through the federal legislation, educational initiatives, and courageous activism, showed that progress demands organization, sacrifice, and moral conviction.⁹¹ Yet Reconstruction repeatedly demonstrated that constitutional guarantees required sustained federal commitment to survive.⁹²

The legacy of Reconstruction endures in classrooms, courts, and communities across the nation.⁹³ Voting rights, civil liberties, and equal access to education trace back to the battles of the 1860s and 1870s.⁹⁴ The courage of those who defied threats and demanded justice echoes through generations, proving that freedom must be pursued relentlessly and defended courageously.⁹⁵ Although Reconstruction failed to fully protect formerly enslaved African Americans in its own time, the Fourteenth Amendment permanently transformed the Constitution by establishing national citizenship and equal protection as enduring principles of American democracy. Its legacy demonstrates that freedom depends on governments and citizens

⁹⁰ NBC News. "Unearthing the Connection between Politics and History with Joanne B. Freeman: Podcast & Transcript." *NBC News*, 11 Dec. 2018, www.nbcnews.com/think/opinion/unearthing-connection-between-politics-history-joanne-b-freeman-podcast-transcript-ncna946711. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁹¹ New York University Journal of Law & Liberty. "The Fourteenth Amendment and the Appropriateness of Federal Power." *NYU Journal of Law & Liberty*, 18 Mar. 2022, www.nyuill.com/volume-15/blog-post-four-2kpz7-7czmg-6fbsx-l9llc-btrht-lkg3w-s29xc-j48tl-cw2jk-b8yaa-f8h5j-mpwmw-bpspw-rtmk9-ywlzz-7ylbh-d3sxd-8gily-5rlbg-yfjbk-ypfld. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

⁹² Perez, Daniel. "Voter Suppression Makes the Racist and Anti-Worker Southern Model Possible: Rooted in Racism and Economic Exploitation: Spotlight." *Economic Policy Institute*, 1 Oct. 2024, www.epi.org/publication/rooted-racism-voter-suppression/.

⁹³ Perman, Michael, and Eric Foner. "Eric Foner's Reconstruction: A Finished Revolution." *Reviews in American History*, vol. 17, no. 1, Mar. 1989, p. 73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2703129>.

⁹⁴ Reconstruction in America, and Henry Louis Gates. "Freedom to Fear." *EJI Reports*, 2019, eji.org/report/reconstruction-in-america/freedom-to-fear/.

⁹⁵ Schonfeld, Roger C. *JSTOR Project Muse*. Princeton University Press, 24 Feb. 2012.

willing to defend it.⁹⁶ Reconstruction's revolution, reaction, and reform show that each generation must defend liberty anew.

⁹⁶ Shapell Manuscript Foundation. "Shapell Manuscript Foundation | Explore American History Online." *Shapell*, 20 Jan. 2026, www.shapell.org/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=662044312&gbraid=0AAAAADlepVbAibKRXOt_vOunHzAJxPTxj&gclid=Cj0KCOiAlczLBhDhARIsAIEc7ujDd1PSoEy1qepcebcQuevMlgeSgsmwLH49oeClb1Esa-XTKesSQflaAkF6EALw_wcB. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

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This source provides a contemporary account of the Supreme Court’s pivotal decision invalidating the Civil Rights Act of 1875, directly illustrating the federal retreat from Reconstruction ideals. It contextualizes the legal groundwork that enabled the rise of Jim Crow segregation and systemic disenfranchisement in the decades that followed.

Backman, Daniel. “*A Vast Labor Bureau*”: *The Freedmen’s Bureau and the Administration of Countervailing Black Labor Power*. 2023, www.yalejreg.com/wp-content/uploads/Daniel-Backman-The-Freedmens-Bureau-and-the-Administration-of-Countervailing-Black-Labor-Power.pdf.

Backman offers a detailed exploration of how the Freedmen’s Bureau sought to balance newly emancipated African Americans’ labor rights against entrenched white economic control. This analysis demonstrates the tensions between federal intervention and local resistance, highlighting structural challenges in enforcing Reconstruction-era protections.

Beauregard, Erving E. “John A. Bingham and the Fourteenth Amendment.” *The Historian*, vol. 50, no. 1, Wiley, 1987, pp. 67–76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/24446951>. JSTOR.

Beauregard examines Bingham’s pivotal role in drafting the Fourteenth Amendment, emphasizing its intended protections for African Americans against state encroachment. The

article is crucial for understanding the constitutional aspirations of Reconstruction and the legal arguments later contested by Supreme Court rulings.

Bingham, John. *Congressional Globe*.

www.justfacts.com/document/14th_amendment_john_bingham_speech.pdf.

This primary document captures Bingham's original speeches advocating for equal citizenship and enforcement of the Bill of Rights post-Civil War. It provides direct evidence of legislative intent behind Reconstruction amendments, which underpins analyses of both their successes and the Supreme Court's restrictive interpretations.

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Memoirs, & Oral Histories." *Guides.lib.ua.edu*, 14 Jan. 2026,

guides.lib.ua.edu/c.php?g=874937&p=6329745.

Boucher's guide aggregates firsthand accounts that illuminate the lived experiences of soldiers, freedpeople, and policymakers during the Civil War and early Reconstruction. These narratives serve as critical evidence for tracing social, political, and racial dynamics that shaped Reconstruction-era legislation and its reception.

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Collections & Archives." *Bowdoin.edu*, 2026,

archivesspace.bowdoin.edu/repositories/2/resources/772. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

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Supremecourthistory.org, 2025,

civics.supremecourthistory.org/article/civil-rights-cases/.

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May 2018, www.law.cornell.edu/constitution/amendmentxiv.

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Bank of Virginia.” *Virginia.gov*, 2026,

www.lva.virginia.gov/collections/educator-resources/dbva/items/show/302.

Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

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Duke University Libraries. "Slave Letters | Duke University Libraries." *Library.duke.edu*, 2026, library.duke.edu/rubenstein/research/guides/slaveletters. Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

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Facing History & Ourselves. "Black Officeholders in the South | Facing History and Ourselves." *Www.facinghistory.org*, 2025, www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/black-officeholders-south. Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

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Wwww.thenation.com, 15 Oct. 2008,

www.thenation.com/article/archive/rooted-reconstruction-first-wave-black-congressmen/.

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www.hagley.org/research/digital-exhibits/fighting-union?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22936104476&gbraid=0AAAAAotPnmPlI8-yRSsBreBSlPLn-7ea9&gclid=CjwKCAiAssfLBhBDEiwAcLpwfnJ72Migo7tqHud3_f-Y5qHZNjainNwV7WLjYlk-bUmGhsRpPAVb_xoCekAQAvD_BwE. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

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www.identifytruth.org/post/what-is-the-14th-amendment-in-simple-terms?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22827031866&gbraid=0AAAAAoJAPzLH61Gh_T4RnyI3WS9ylik4X&gclid=CjwKCAiAssfLBhBDEiwAcLpwfstnhTVVEQy5rbQ8hm7kV5aD1nCsQTWwyGh_1xnN8IAAnsV928PaPLBoCAtoQAvD_BwE.

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Knoles, Lucia Z. "James Henry Hammond, 'Speech of Hon. James H. Hammond, of South Carolina, on the Admission of Kansas, under the Lecompton Constitution: Delivered in the Senate of the United States, March 4, 1858,' 1858."

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<http://mac110.assumption.edu/aas/default.html>.

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www.sos.la.gov/HistoricalResources/AboutLouisiana/LouisianaGovernors1861-1877/Pages/PBSPinchback.aspx. Accessed 20 Jan. 2026.

This profile documents the first African American governor in U.S. history. It highlights the political achievements of African Americans during Reconstruction despite systemic resistance.

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www.americanyawp.com/reader/reconstruction/mississippi-black-code-1865/.

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[www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/videos/escape-robert-smalls-daring-voyage-out-slavery?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=10648156210&gbraid=0AAAAADn7-c1NyKDBJ5eSflukBqA--idz4&gclid=CjwKCAiAssfLBhBDEiwAcLpwfny4qUweEYCvObQRh8t-47oadeWJCax96KRI9yLdxR6P6_aCvL038hoCwzcQ](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/videos/escape-robert-smalls-daring-voyage-out-slavery?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=10648156210&gbraid=0AAAAADn7-c1NyKDBJ5eSflukBqA--idz4&gclid=CjwKCAiAssfLBhBDEiwAcLpwfny4qUweEYCvObQRh8t-47oadeWJCax96KRI9yLdxR6P6_aCvL038hoCwzcQAvD_BwE)

[AvD_BwE](https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-resources/videos/escape-robert-smalls-daring-voyage-out-slavery?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=10648156210&gbraid=0AAAAADn7-c1NyKDBJ5eSflukBqA--idz4&gclid=CjwKCAiAssfLBhBDEiwAcLpwfny4qUweEYCvObQRh8t-47oadeWJCax96KRI9yLdxR6P6_aCvL038hoCwzcQAvD_BwE). Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

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This source analyzes legal restrictions imposed on freedpeople. It illustrates the systemic barriers Reconstruction policies sought to overcome.

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“One Country, One Constitution, and One People. Speech of Hon. John A. Bingham, of Ohio, in the House of Representatives, February 28, 1866, in Support of the Proposed Amendment to Enforce the Bill of Rights.” *The Library of Congress*, 2023, www.loc.gov/item/17030815/. Accessed 23 Jan. 2026.

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This article examines the role of African American soldiers in post-Civil War politics and the violent backlash they faced from white communities. It highlights the interaction between military service, political activism, and systemic racial hostility.

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Stanford University. "Civil Rights Act of 1964 Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute." *Kinginstitute.stanford.edu*, 2 July 1964, kinginstitute.stanford.edu/civil-rights-act-1964.

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The Charleston Museum. “The Charleston Museum | News and Events» “Waving the Bloody Shirt:” Reconstruction Era Violence and Political Identity.” *Charlestonmuseum.org*, 2024, www.charlestonmuseum.org/news-events/waving-the-bloody-shirt-reconstruction-era-violence-and-political-identity/.

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Tyson Darling, Marsha J. "A Right Deferred: African American Voter Suppression after Reconstruction | Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History."
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www.ebsco.com/research-starters/law/reconstruction-and-supreme-court.

This resource examines Supreme Court decisions that shaped Reconstruction policies and the interpretation of civil rights legislation. It highlights the judiciary’s role in limiting or advancing Reconstruction-era reforms.