

# Carpetbaggers and Sealawags

PowerPoint Presentation

Part of the  
Reconstruction Unit  
Lesson 4 of 5

LoopDog



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# VOCABULARY

Scalawags –

Carpetbaggers –

Conservatives –

Blanche K. Bruce –

Hiram Revels –

Ku Klux Klan –

White supremacy –

Sharecroppers –



Small engravings of the members of the 41st and 42nd Congresses of the United States.  
ROBERT C. LAMAR, MD. of Georgia      JEFFERSON H. LORING, of Georgia  
US SENATOR HARRIS of Missouri      BENJ. TURNER, MD. of Virginia      JOHN T. WALLS, MD. of Florida      JOSEPH H. RANT, MD. of Carolina      A. EDWIN ELLET, MD. of Louisiana  
**THE FIRST COLORED SENATOR AND REPRESENTATIVES.**  
In the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the United States.

NEW YORK. PUBLISHED BY JORDAN & KEL, 25 NASSAU STREET.

# Today's Thinking Focus

## What groups dominated Southern politics during Reconstruction?

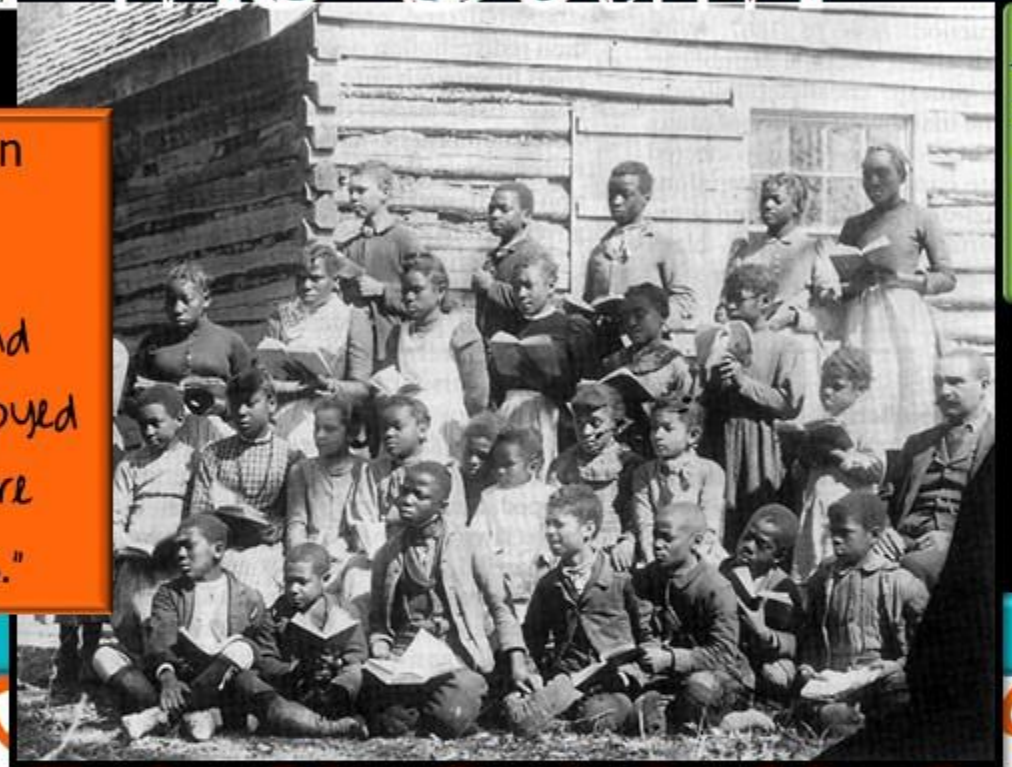
# And the story continues . . .

- As the Civil War drew to a close, President Lincoln created the Ten Percent Plan to unite the nation. Congress proposed the Wade-Davis Bill which was much harsher. Lincoln also supported the creation of the Freedmen's Bureau to help freed African Americans with food, jobs and education.
- President Lincoln is assassinated by John Wilkes Booth and Andrew Johnson becomes president. Radical Republicans want Johnson to deliver a harsh Reconstruction plan to the South, instead he delivers a mild version that does not force the South to give African Americans rights.
- Radical Republicans are able to get a majority in both houses of Congress which helps them to override any presidential veto. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment is passed, in response the South passes Black Codes severely limiting the rights of freedmen. President Johnson refuses to enforce the First Reconstruction Act and he is impeached. In the end, the Senate does not find him guilty.

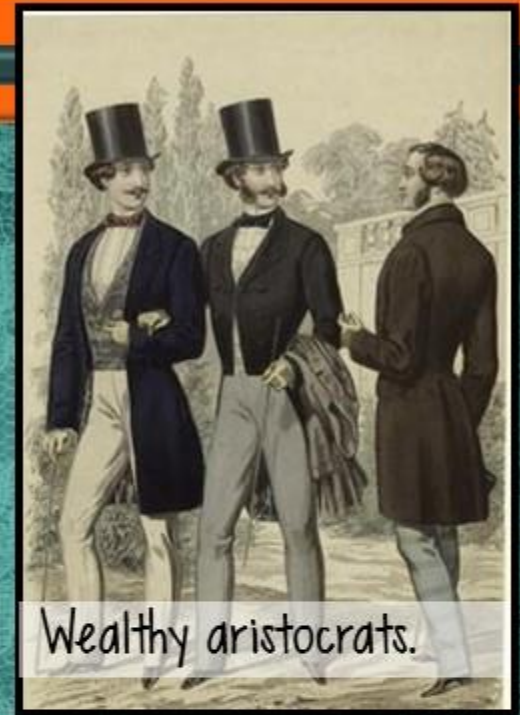
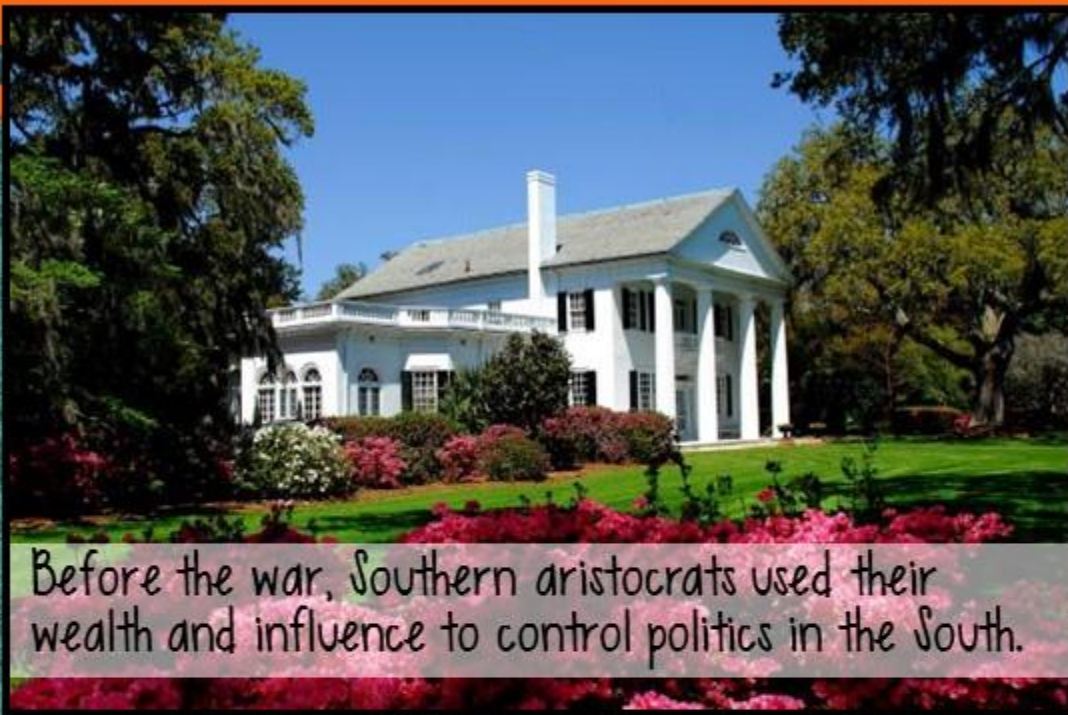
# Changes in the South

A political convention of freedmen in Alabama wrote this declaration,

*"We claim exactly the same rights and privileges and immunities as are enjoyed by white men. We ask nothing more and will be content with nothing less."*

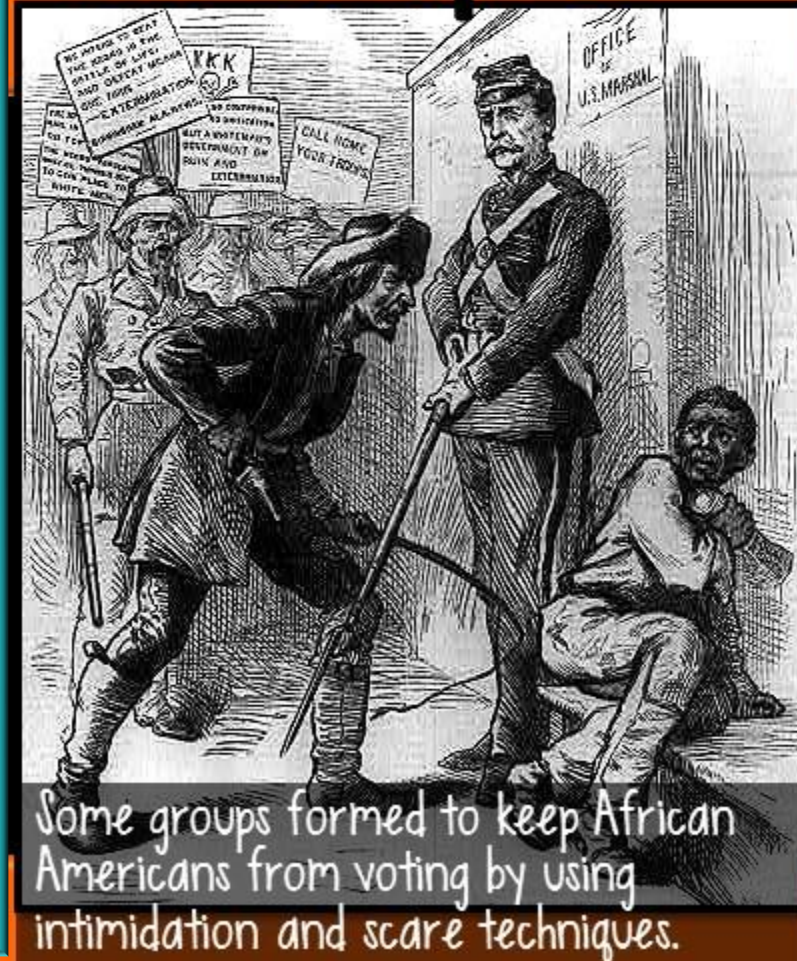


- Just two years after the Civil War had come to an end, life in the South had changed drastically.
- Due in part to Radical Republicans passing strict Reconstruction laws (including the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Amendments), African Americans were now allowed to work for themselves, vote, and run for office.



- Before the Civil War, a small group of wealthy plantation owners dominated Southern state politics.
- Through their wealth and influence these planters decided which bills became law, which individuals ran for government seats, and which governmental policies were passed.
- During Reconstruction, these wealthy planters lost power and were replaced by new groups dominating state government.

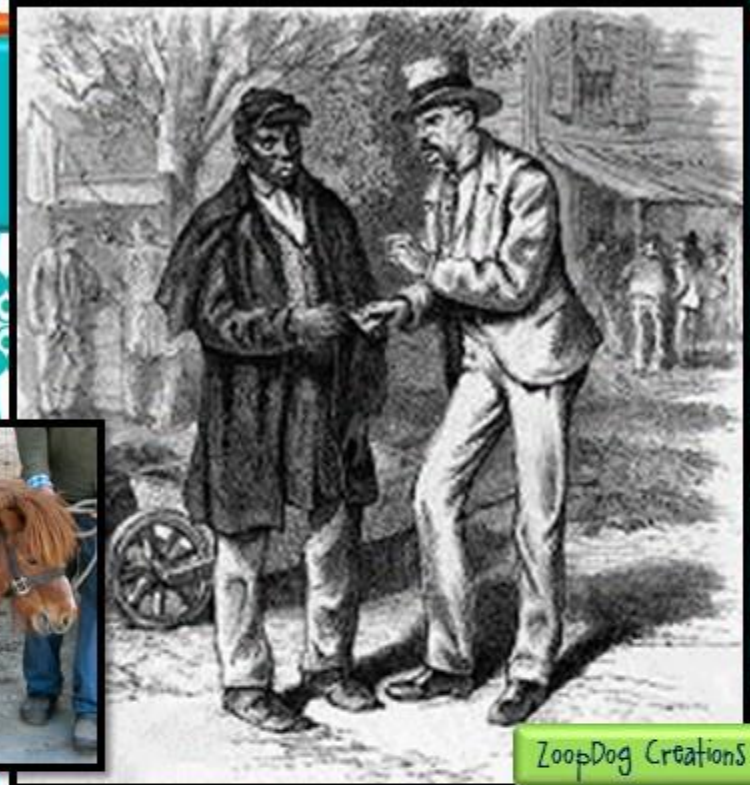
# New Political Groups



- Radical Reconstruction forced the South to create new state governments. These governments were different from anything the South had known before.
- With the old leaders losing their power and influence, these new groups reshaped Southern politics.
- Some worked to promote African American rights, while others worked against them.
- These new groups were:
  - White Southerners who supported Republicans (Scalawags).
  - Northerners who moved south after the war (carpetbaggers)
  - African Americans

# Scalawags

A scalawag is a negative name given to Southern born white Republicans. They were considered traitors by other white Southerners. The name also means a small scruffy (many consider to be useless) horse.



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- Most Southerners despised the new Republican governments. Still, there were a few business people from the South who had opposed secession in 1860.
- These Southerners wanted to put the war behind them and begin investing and making money on rebuilding the South.
- Many whites in the South felt that any Southerner who helped the Republicans was a traitor. They called white Southern Republicans **scalawags**.





# Carpetbaggers

- Another group that influenced Southern politics was the arrival of Northerners who came south after the war.
- White Southerners called these new arrivals from the North **carpetbaggers** – **fortune hunters hoping to profit from the South's misery**. They feared Northerners would loot and plunder the already defeated South.
- Southerners also worried Carpetbaggers would give their support to Radical Republicans. In fact, most Southern governors and sixty members of Congress elected during Reconstruction were carpetbaggers.



Northerners coming South were called Carpetbaggers because Southerners claimed they only had time to fling a few clothes into cheap carpetbag suitcases before coming to plunder the South.



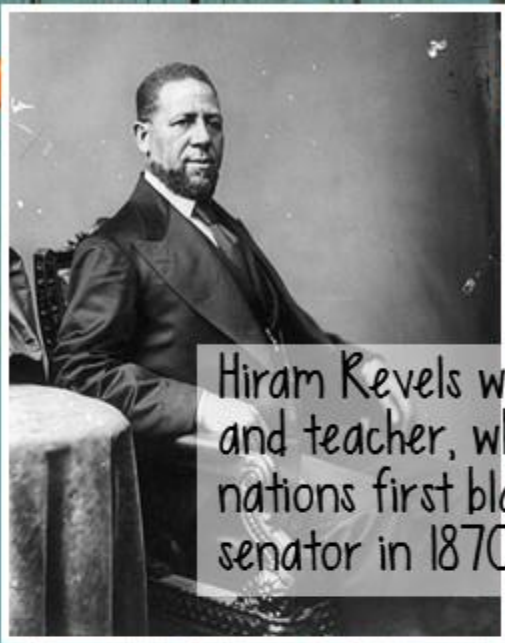
A freedmen's industrial school - learning to sew.

- Not all Northerners wanted to profit from the South's misery. Some were Union soldiers who had grown to love the South's fertile land and warm climate during the war.
- Some white and black Northerners were teachers, ministers, and reformers who sincerely wanted to help improve the lives of freedmen.

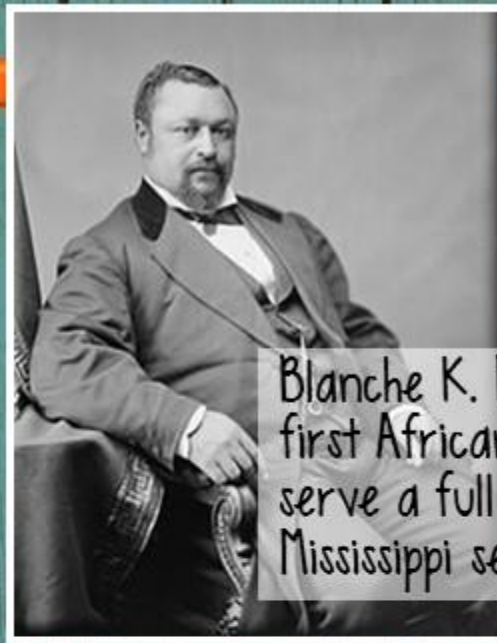
# African Americans



- African Americans and freedmen were the third group that influenced Southern politics.
- African Americans living in the South had no voice in their government before the war. During Reconstruction freedmen exercised their new rights by voting in large numbers.
- Freedmen also ran for and were elected to public office in the South and the United States Congress.



Hiram Revels was a clergyman and teacher, who became the nation's first Black Mississippi senator in 1870.



Blanche K. Bruce became the first African American to serve a full term in the Mississippi senate in 1874.

- Between 1869 and 1880, sixteen African Americans were elected to Congress.
- African Americans also became sheriffs, mayors, and legislators in the new state and local governments.
- **Hiram Revels** became Mississippi's first Black senator when he was elected to complete the unfinished term of former Confederate president Jefferson Davis.
- **Blanche K. Bruce** was born into slavery but was educated by his master who helped to secure his freedom when the Civil War began. He went on to served as county sheriff and later in the Mississippi senate.

# Conservatives

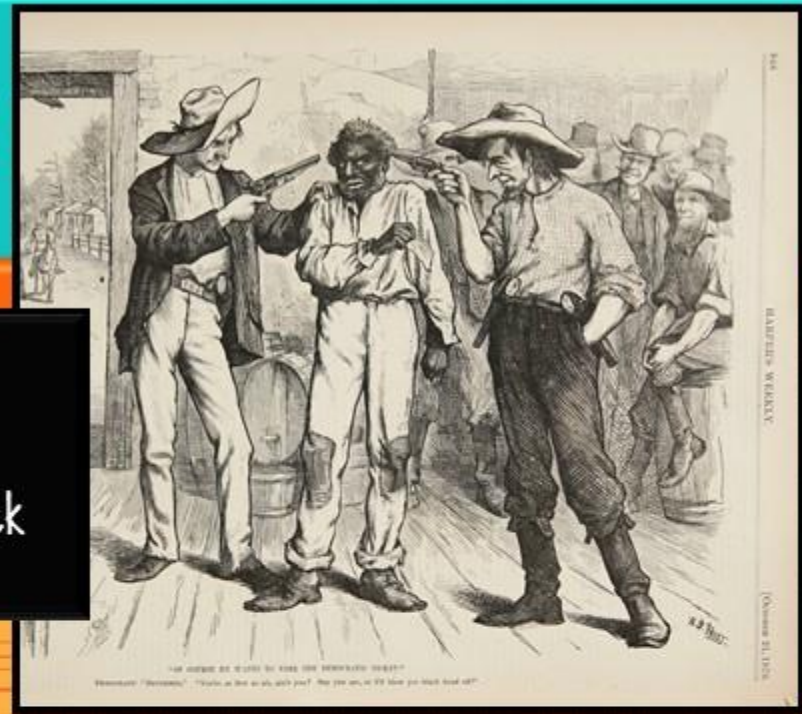


Conservatives resisted giving blacks equal rights as whites. They believed slavery had not been a moral injustice.

- Most wealthy white Southerners disagreed with Reconstruction and resisted the changes it brought to the South.
- Southerners who wanted the South to change as little as possible were called **Conservatives**.
- Conservatives resented that slavery had been outlawed with the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Seeing no way around it, they were willing to let African Americans vote and hold a few offices.
- Still, Conservatives believed real government power should remain in the hands of white men.

# Angry Conservatives

A cartoon from Harper's Weekly a month before the 1876 elections. It shows Democrats using intimidation techniques to suppress Southern black votes.

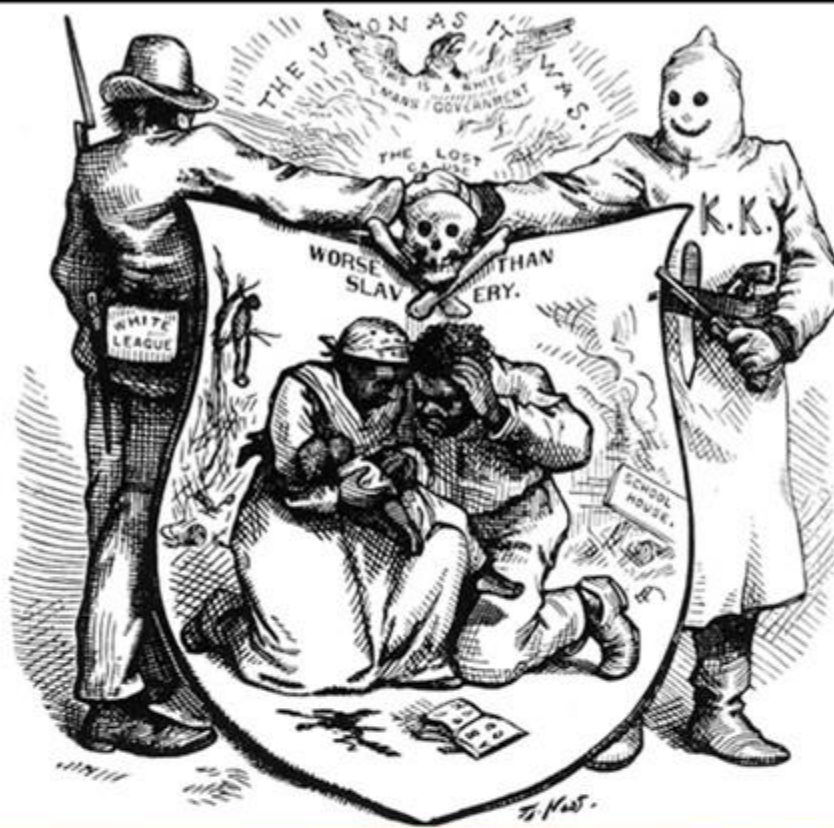


- **Wealthy planters were angry because . . .** They never accepted the fact that African Americans were free. They wanted to force African Americans back onto plantations.
- **Small farmers and laborers were angry because . . .** They wanted the government to take action against the millions of freed slaves that now competed with them for land and jobs.
- Southerners that did not support Reconstruction called themselves Democrats. **Democrats were angry because . . .** they disliked anyone who cooperated or supported the Republicans.

# What Do You Think?

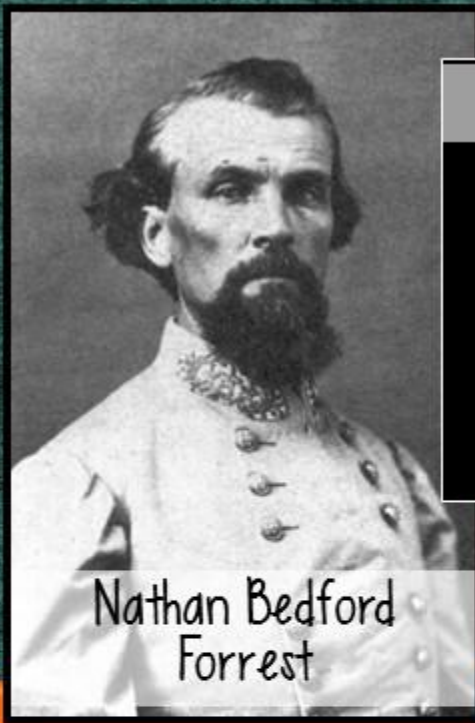
"This is a white man's country,"  
**Conservatives**  
**cried,** "and white men must govern it."

Do you agree with this statement? Is America a "white man's country?" Explain.



- Some white Southerners were so outraged by the freedoms gained by African Americans that they turned to violence.
- White Southerners formed secret societies to torment, scare and murder freedmen. They did this because they believed it would help to regain power they had lost during Reconstruction.
- The most dangerous of these secret societies was the **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)**.





Nathan Bedford  
Forrest

The symbol for the KKK



- The KKK was formed by a group of Confederate army soldiers in Tennessee in 1865. Confederate general, Nathan Bedford Forrest was the Klan's first leader. His title was Grand Wizard.
- The Klan took its name from the Greek word *kuklos*, meaning circle.
- The main goal of the Ku Klux Klan was to keep Republicans (Black and white) out of office and to prevent African Americans from voting.
- The KKK would dress in white robes with hoods over their heads to conceal their identity.



Lynching is a method to put someone to death, usually by hanging, by a mob of people. This 1868, cartoon shows the KKK lynching carpetbaggers.



The Ku Klux Klan burning a cross.

- The KKK would mainly ride at night to the homes of African American voters, shouting threats, throwing rocks through their windows, and burning wooden crosses in their yards.
- When threats did not work, the Klan turned to violence and was responsible for lynching hundreds of blacks and their white allies.

# The Ku Klux Klan Today

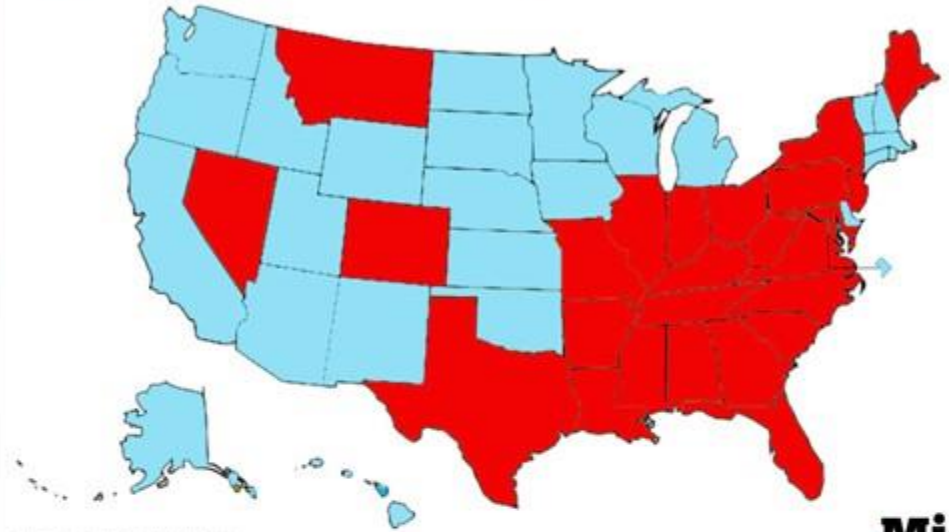


The KKK reached its popularity in the 1920s with an estimated membership of up to six million people.

## States With Active KKK Groups

■ At least one active Klu Klux Klan group

■ No documented active Klu Klux Klan group



Source: Southern Poverty Law Center

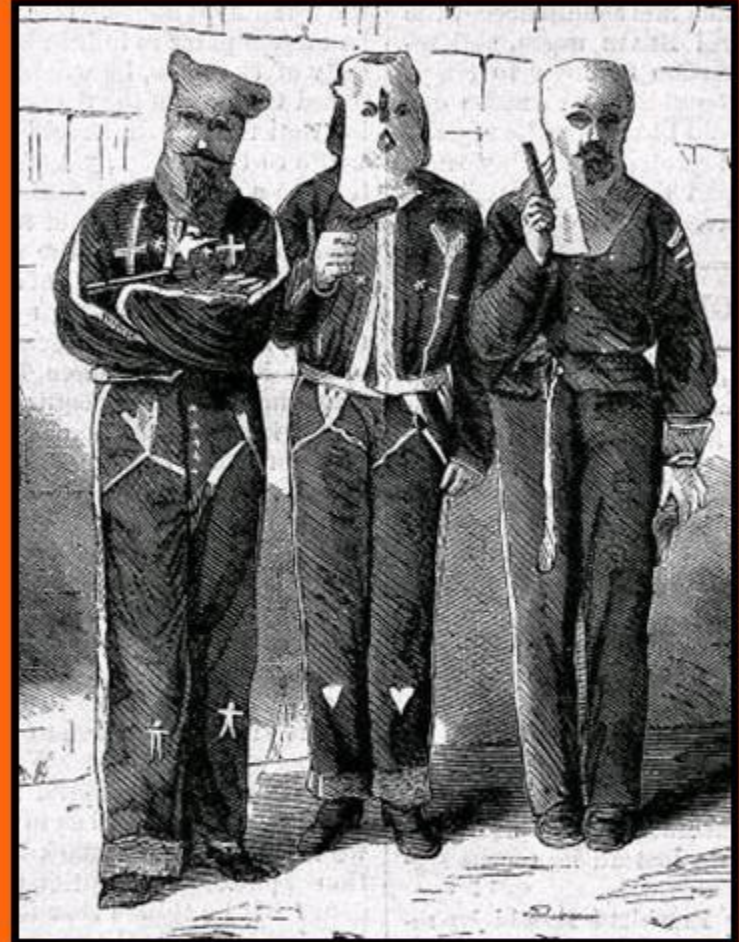
.Mic

The KKK is no longer a unified group but several smaller groups scattered throughout the states. It is estimated to have between 5,000 and 8,000 members today.

Although the KKK is not unified, their agendas are similar. They oppose interracial marriage (marrying outside the white race), Jews, Catholics, immigrants and African Americans. **They believe in white supremacy – that the white race is superior.**

# Voting in Fear

- The U.S. Congress tried to end Klan violence across the South. In 1870, Congress made it a crime to use force to keep people from voting.
- This helped to decrease some vicious Klan activities. Yet the threat of violence and intimidation was always present when African Americans went to cast their ballots in Southern elections.
- Others were too scared to vote and stayed away from the ballot box completely.



Three Ku Klux Klan members arrested in Mississippi for the attempted murder of a black family.



- Between 1865 and 1879, an enormous amount of rebuilding took place across the South.
- Reconstruction governments built public schools for both whites and black children and many states gave women the right to own property.
- Buildings, bridges, telegraph lines, and roads were all rebuilt from the destruction the South suffered from the war.
- In addition, the railway system was much improved as the South put down over 7,000 miles of railroad track.

# Higher Taxes



Taxes in the South were lower before the war.



Taxes in the South are higher after the war. Its expensive to rebuild the South.

- It cost a lot of money to rebuild the South, which prompted state governments to increase taxes.
- Southerners, who had experienced very low taxes before the war, were angered by the sharp increase they now had to pay.
- Southerners were further angered by widespread corruption in some of the Reconstruction governments.
- Some state legislatures were using taxpayers money to pay for personal items such a hams, perfume, and debts from horseracing.

# *"40 acres and a mule."*



- As the war ended, many freedmen left the plantations that some had worked and lived on most of their lives, to seek out new opportunities.
- It didn't take long for freedmen to experience the harsh realities of being uneducated and poor, with few employment opportunities.
- Some Radical Republicans talked about giving each freedmen "40 acres and a mule" to help them out.

- Thaddeus Stevens, a well-known Radical Republican, proposed breaking up large plantations owned by wealthy planters and redistributing the land.
- Stevens blamed these wealthy aristocrats for the Civil War and felt they should be punished.

# What Do You Think?

Should former slaves be given a mule and forty acres of land taken from large plantations?  
Explain your answer.



# "Nothing but Freedom."



- While Reconstruction may have given former slaves citizenship and basic rights, it did little to help them survive financially. As one freedmen stated, they were given “nothing but freedom.”
- It took African Americans hard work and a lot of luck to be able to call a piece of land their own.
- Most could not find jobs or a place to live and had little choice but to return back to the plantations where they had once been enslaved.

# Sharecroppers



Sharecropping was hard work and often took the help of the entire family.

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- Some plantation owners (with a little luck and hard work) were able to hold on to their land and wealth during the war.
- They now faced tending to their large farms and land with no slave help. During Reconstruction, many freedmen and poor whites went to work on these large plantations, they were called **sharecroppers**.
- Large plantation owners would provide the fertilizer, tools and seed. The sharecroppers would farm the land. In return, the planters got a share of the crop at harvest time.



- Sharecroppers hoped one day to own their own land, sadly this rarely occurred. Sharecroppers were lucky to have enough food after harvest to feed and clothes themselves and their families.
- Often times Sharecroppers were taken advantage of by the planter. Usually they were indebted for additional supplies or food to get them through to the next harvest.
- This led to a cycle of poverty that many times extended to the next generation.

# The Cycle of Poverty

Poor whites and freedmen have no education, no homes, and no money to buy their own land.

Wealthy landowner allows sharecroppers to work his land. They promise the landowner half of their crop for payment (like rent).

Sharecroppers buy supplies, seed, tools, clothes, and food from the landowner on credit. They will pay the landowner back at harvest time.

At harvest time the landowner sells the crop and keeps his part of the profit. He gives the sharecropper his share of the profit minus the amount the sharecropper owes the landowner for the supplies.

The sharecropper owes more to the landlord than his share of the crop is worth. He cannot leave the farm as long as he is in debt to the landowner.

# What Do You Think?



Was sharecropping just another form of slavery? Explain your answer.



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