

1 Reconstruction

13 After the Civil War was over, African Americans in the Southern United
22 States were not truly free. Despite Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation
35 Proclamation of 1863, where he wrote, "...all persons held as slaves... shall be
44 then, thenceforward, and forever free..." African Americans suffered violence,
57 intimidation, and death at the hands of Whites who refused to honor their
69 freedom. Many Southern Whites wanted to live their lives and continue slavery
82 as if the Civil War had never occurred. Lincoln intended for African Americans
95 to experience freedom and opportunity after the Civil War, but this did not
108 happen. Lincoln's assassination was one reason for this, and the other was the
121 refusal on the part of Whites to recognize former slaves as free American
122 Citizens.

131 The ten year period immediately following the Civil War is commonly
144 known as *Reconstruction*. It was a violent time when white racist vigilantes or
156 terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan re-enslaved, injured, or killed thousands
167 of African Americans throughout the Southern States. They did this because
183 they wanted to maintain control of the land and the way of life they had lived
195 before the war. It was like a second Civil War. Many White landowners forced
208 African Americans to work their land for little or no pay. Southern Whites
217 fought against Reconstruction and the ideas of Lincoln. Lincoln was
231 assassinated just a few days after the Civil War ended and his proposal for

242 Reconstruction was offered. White people in the South remained angry about
258 the result of the Civil War where they lost property and slavery and the lives of
272 over 250,000 men who fought for the South in the war. Homelessness and
282 extreme poverty affected Blacks and Whites alike during Reconstruction. The
294 economic system of the South was completely destroyed. Banks had no money
302 and there was little legitimate business taking place.

311 Radical Republicans were people who were Abolitionists trying to
324 protect the rights of African Americans in the South. They wanted swift change
335 granting full rights to freed African Americans. The Radical Republicans were
346 targets of the white racist vigilantes. The Radical Republicans created the
357 Freedman's Bureau, designed to help freed blacks own property and improve
370 their lives, but it was largely ineffective because it was underfunded, and the
382 new president, Andrew Johnson, who had been Lincoln's vice president, did not
397 want it to succeed. Johnson was not in favor of granting rights to freed Blacks.
412 He did not see Blacks and Whites as equals. Johnson had no sympathy for the
428 situation Blacks in the South were in, with no land of their own, no money, and
440 little opportunity for education. Johnson did not want racial equality for Blacks.
453 Whites suffered no punishments for the war and were welcomed back into the
465 Union with little or no penalties. Some leaders of the Confederacy became
477 government leaders again in Southern States soon after the war was over.

488 Once former slave owning whites were forgiven, they returned to their
500 racist ways and began creating and enforcing laws designed to hurt African
512 Americans and keep them down. The severe unjust laws that whites enacted
524 were called Black Codes. According to these Black Codes, Blacks could not
538 own guns. Without guns, Blacks could not use guns to hunt animals for food.
549 Blacks could not start their own business. Essentially, black codes prevented
561 blacks from having any opportunities and forced many of them to essentially
572 become slaves, working on a White landowner's farm, once again. Some
584 historians compare this situation to what Apartheid was like in South Africa,
597 where there was abject poverty and segregation in nearly all aspects of society.
608 Some southern states legalized the beating of African Americans for not
620 'bowing down' to Whites. Some African Americans, with the assistance of the
634 Radical Republicans, tried to gain the right to vote for Blacks in New Orleans,
646 Louisiana. But this effort failed because the racist Whites prevented them from
659 attending a convention where their right to vote would be debated. More than
672 50 black demonstrators were killed by racist Whites trying to deny them the
686 right to vote in the bloody event, now known as the *New Orleans Massacre*.
698 Violence on Blacks, similar to what happened in New Orleans, was happening
711 all over the South. Things were still really miserable for Black people. Andrew
725 Johnson was a terrible politician and leader. He was not doing anything to help
740 black people. He was drunk a lot and he made public comments that showed he

753 was not sensitive to their situation. In 1866, the Radical Republicans won a
764 majority in Congress and began taking power away from Andrew Johnson.
773 They voted to enact a stronger form of Reconstruction.

782 Parson “Bloody” Bill Brownlow was an Abolitionist minister and
793 newspaper man who wrote scathing editorials about how bad racist White
806 people were to Blacks in the South. He was appointed governor of Tennessee.
818 He was very aggressive in working toward helping Blacks access the freedom
827 and equality they were promised under Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation.
839 To ensure that the 14th Amendment, which granted citizenship to “all persons
853 born or naturalized in the United States,” would pass in his state, he threatened
865 to execute racist legislators who tried to prevent the vote from occurring.
878 Tennessee then became the first state to let Black people vote. Racist White
891 people in the South, however, continued to be ‘offended’ about changes in their
898 lifestyles with the rights afforded to Blacks.

912 Upon returning to their home state after their defeat in the Civil War, six
924 former Confederate soldiers in Tennessee formed the Ku Klux Klan with the
935 intention of scaring, beating, burning, or killing freed African Americans, and
947 Whites would helped them in any way. Membership in the KKK increased
959 rapidly among racist White people. Governor Brownlow tried to stop the KKK
972 from attacking Blacks, but he got little support, even from his own law
982 enforcement departments. Nathan Bedford Forrest was the first Grand Wizard

996 of the KKK. The KKK's first major effort was to scare Blacks away from
1012 voting in the 1868 election. While the KKK had as many as 40,000 members at
1027 this time, they were never able to fully join together as a unified military force.
1039 On a small scale, however, they performed awful atrocities against thousands of
1049 Blacks throughout the state of Tennessee, and other southern states.

1062 Despite the misconception that the end of the Civil War started a new life
1076 of freedom and equality for Blacks in the South, life was actually worse in
1089 many ways for them. Equal rights were something that Blacks would not realize
1104 for a long time. Some rights, in fact, were not realized for more than one
1117 hundred years after the Civil War. African Americans were still fighting for the
1132 right to vote in many parts of the United States as recently as the 1960's.
1143 Reconstruction under the Radical Republicans was an effort to improve the
1160 situation for Blacks in the South, but it met a lot of resistance, for a long time,
1173 from Racist Whites who did not want to see change in southern society.