

## THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA – CAUSE AND EFFECT

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The Reconstruction Era, which followed the Civil War, was a time in which the country started to readmit southern confederate states back into the Union. It has been referred to as the Second Civil War. Abraham Lincoln is killed by John Wilkes Booth just a few days after the one of the last battles of the Civil War, which results in Andrew Johnson becoming the next president and has to deal with Reconstruction. Black Codes are enforced in the south, which results in the freedoms and liberties of African Americans to be strictly restricted. The Compromise of 1877, an agreement between allies of Republican Rutherford Hayes and southern Democrats that allowed Hayes to become president but marks the end of the Reconstruction Era. The Reconstruction Era was a time after the Civil War in which the United States grappled with the challenges of reintegrating Confederate southern states back into the Union, which came with many hardships.

In an attempt to save the Confederacy as the Civil War is coming to an end, Abraham Lincoln is shot and killed by John Wilkes Booth on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1865. This results in Vice President Andrew Johnson becoming the President in place of Lincoln. Being President, this puts Johnson on the front end of restoring the country during Reconstruction. His plan was like Lincoln's 10% plan, to allow Southern states to be able to send representatives back to Washington, by 10% of the state's voters from the 1860 presidential election take an oath of allegiance to the Union and the Constitution. Johnson wanted to allow Confederate leaders to regain their former seats, which created tensions between freedmen in the South and Republicans in the North.<sup>1</sup> As Republicans wanted to punish the South, Johnson did not. Under President

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<sup>1</sup> "Andrew Johnson and Reconstruction." National Parks Service. U.S. Department of the Interior. Accessed September 22, 2020. [www.nps.gov/anjo/andrew-johnson-and-reconstruction.htm](http://www.nps.gov/anjo/andrew-johnson-and-reconstruction.htm).

Johnson, no treason trials occurred. There was even greater tension building between the mostly Republican Congress and President Johnson, as Johnson vetoed almost every bill they had proposed to help African Americans in the South.

Black Codes were restrictive laws that were made to restrict the freedoms of African Americans. The main reason for the enforcement of these codes was to ensure their availability as a cheap labor force after slavery was abolished.<sup>2</sup> Cotton was the main crop of the South. They had plenty of land, but not enough people to work in the fields. Under black codes, most states made it legally mandatory for African Americans to sign yearly contracts. If they refused to do so, they faced punishments such as they faced risks such as being fined and forced into unpaid work or even being arrested. African Americans could not serve on juries when a white was being tried and they could not serve as a witness against a white. The Black Codes gave groups like the Ku Klux Klan, which were all white, freedom to terrorize African Americans since they couldn't be testified against by them in court. The Republican Party gained support from the African Americans, due to the outrage of the Black Codes.

The Compromise of 1877 was an agreement made between southern Democrats and allies of Republican Rutherford Hayes to settle the result of the 1876 presidential election.<sup>3</sup> The terms of the compromise gave what the Democrats wanted, for the removal of all U.S. military troops from the former Confederate states. The Republicans also got what they wanted;

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<sup>2</sup> "Black Codes." History.com. A&E Television Networks, June 1, 2010.  
<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/black-codes>.

<sup>3</sup> "Compromise of 1877." History.com. A&E Television Networks, March 17, 2011.  
<https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/compromise-of-1877>.

Rutherford Hayes became the 19<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, along with a southerner to be appointed to Haye's cabinet. Funding also would be provided for the internal improvements in the South. This compromise marked the end of the Reconstruction Era.

The Reconstruction Era was a time, after the end of the Civil War, in which the country started to readmit southern confederate states back into the Union. This time brought many hardships. Events in this time include President Lincoln being assassinated, black codes enforced that restricted the rights of African Americans in the South, and the Compromise of 1877. African Americans struggled through this time, and they had a rough time awaiting them.

## Bibliography

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