The End of Slavery, the Role of the Freedmen's Bureau and the Introduction of Peonage

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1. Introduction

Of all the problems raised by emancipation, none proved more critical than the transition from slave to free labor. Slavery had been, among other things, a labor system designed at generating profits by the extensive (ab)use of black bodies. Reconstruction can be conceived of as a multicausal process that includes different trajectories. Whereas slaves wanted to be free, both economically and in a political sense, the old elites in the South wanted slavery back, at least in the sense that they would regain access to black workers and the lands that now laid wasted or had been claimed by the US government. While members of the Republican Party on the other hand agreed that "free labor" would replace forced labor, they disagreed however about what free labor would mean in the Old South. As the United States Army proceeded to invade and occupy the rebellious Confederacy during the war, hundreds of thousands of slaves became free workers. Moreover, Yankee occupation meant that Union armies controlled vast territories of land to which any legal title had become unclear. The war-time Confiscation Acts punished Confederate traitors by confiscating their property. The open question what to do with federally occupied land and how to organize labor on it engaged former slaves, former slaveholders, Union military commanders, and federal government officials long before the war ended.

In this article, I argue that the labor question was the most urging one both for Southern plantation owners and for slaves. Commencing already during the Civil War, reconstruction first seemed to provide former slaves with confiscated lands. The Freedmen's Bureau was created by the government to provide help and assistance to the ex-slaves that had left their plantations or had been driven out. African Americans expressed their quest for autonomy on different levels, i.e. in terms of marriage and the freedom to worship. The Freedmen's Bureau (FB), however, provided not only food, shelter and work for the Freedpeople but was instrumental in integrating them into a liberal market system without endowing them with full rights as citizens of the United States. This was achieved, as I will show, by providing them with labor contracts, which temporarily forced Freedpeople to return to their former plantations, an educational system that put a strong emphasis on Christian morals and a reformulation of the Freedpeople's marital status. Resistance against Reconstruction was put up by racist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan. Through direct violence and intimidation they paved the way for the institution of a caste system that replaced both slavery and quasi-free labor without giving the Freedpeople full autonomy. Sharecropping finally sealed the fate of Reconstruction as it integrated forms of

extralegal violence into an economic system that prolonged the existence of debt peonage in the South well into the 20th century.

2. Reconstruction as Redistribution of Land and Labor

From Virginia's tidewater to Louisiana's bayous, a variety of wartime labor experiments arose. The system that developed in the Mississippi valley proved to be a preview of postwar southern labor relations. Up and down the Mississippi, occupying federal troops ended slavery, which had already begun to fall apart because of slaves' resistance, and announced a new labor code. It required planters to sign contracts with their laborers and to pay wages. The code also obligated employers to provide food, housing, and medical care. It outlawed whipping and other forms of physical punishment, but it reserved to the army the right to discipline Blacks who refused to work. The code required black laborers to enter into contracts, work diligently, and remain subordinate and obedient. While the military took aim at slavery, it clearly had no intention of fomenting a social or economic revolution. Instead, it sought to restore plantation agriculture with wage labor. The effort resulted in an oxymoron, a hybrid system of "compulsory free labor" that satisfied the plantation owners and bestowed a fragile and temporary freedom to Freedpeople. It has been argued that in its initial stages the new labor system represented a class compromise between the demands of the former slave owners and the Freedpeople, who by negotiating with their employers entered the realm of free labor.[1] Depending on one's point of view, it either provided too little or too much of a break with the past. Planters complained because the new system fell short of slavery. African Americans also criticized the new regime. They found it too reminiscent of slavery to be called "free labor". Of its many shortcomings, none disappointed ex-slaves more than the failure to provide them land of their own.[2] "What's de use of being free if you don't own land enough to be buried in? Might juss as well stay slave all yo, days?"[3] Freedmen were determined to become independent, and that required land. They believed they had a moral right to land because they and their ancestors had worked it without compensation for more than two centuries. Moreover, several wartime developments seemed to indicate that the federal government planned to link black freedom and landownership.

The insistence of northern military men and members of the FB that liberated African Americans should not be idle but must be put to work reflects the strong producerist ideology that existed within the FB. From the earliest days of

[1] Shlomowitz, Ralph, "Bound" or "Free"? Black Labor in Cotton and Sugarcane Farming, 1865-1880, in: The Journal of Southern History, 50/4 (1984), pp. 569-596.
[2] Cox, LaWanda, The Promise of Land for the Freedmen, in: The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, 45/3 (1985), pp. 413-440.
[3] Reid, Whitelaw, After the War: A Southern Tour. May 1, 1865, to May 1, 1866, Cincinnati, New York: Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin 1866, p. 564.

Reconstruction on, US Army generals insisted on putting "idling" slaves back to work without regard of their former state of enslavement. Louisiana, invaded by US troops as early as 1862, turned out to be one of the laboratories of Reconstruction. General Major Nathaniel Prentice Banks, like many Civil War generals also a politician and former Governor of Massachusetts, in charge of troops in Louisiana, instituted a so-called "Negro labor program", requiring Freedpeople to sign a yearly contract with an employer of their choice. The Army was put in charge of monitoring the fulfillment of the contract. "The order threatened vagrants with arrest and a term of unpaid labor on public works."[4] Louisiana's free Black reacted outraged, when they heard of the treatment that Freedpeople had to endure under Bank's orders.[5]

"Located at its heart was the labor theory of value, which insisted that those who produced wealth were entitled to the full product of their labor, contrary to market logic."[6] "Producerism, […] a doctrine that champions the so-called producers in society against both 'unproductive' elites and subordinate groups defined as lazy or immoral […]", is a characteristic trait of right-wing populist ideologies. It "[…] bolstered White supremacy, blurred actual class divisions, and embraced some elite groups while scapegoating others." [7]

The shock troops of the drive to maintain White supremacist race relations in the postemancipation South were groups like the first Ku Klux Klan, which represented an "alliance between Southern lower- and middle-class Whites and wealthy Southern planters" who tried to regain lost privileges as a result of emancipation.[8] It is my argument, then, that members of the southern elites and officers and administrators of the FB shared some political convictions that help to explain the North's reluctance to intervene against the replacement of slavery by a new caste system defines according to class divisions.[9] Former slaveholders used the FB's insistence to put Freedpeople to immediate use on the old planta-

[4] Dawson, Joseph G., Army Generals and Reconstruction Louisiana, 1862-1877, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1982, p. 14.
[5] Tunnell, Ted, Crucible of Reconstruction: War, Radicalism, and Race in Louisiana, 1862-1877, Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press 1984, pp. 83-84.
[6] Lipin, Lawrence M., Producers, Proletarians, and Politicians Workers and Party Politics in Evansville and New Albany, Indiana, 1850-87, Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1994, p. 3.
[7] Berlet, Chip/ Lyons, Matthew Nemiroff, Right-Wing Populism in America: Too Close for Comfort, New York: Guilford Press 2000, p. 6.
[8] Michael, George, Confronting Right Wing Extremism and Terrorism in the USA, New York: Routledge 2003, p. 4. Michael refers to Berlet/ Lyons, Right-Wing Populism.
[9] Lawrence Glickman states that producerism was on its way out after the Civil War only to be replaced by consumerism. I remain unconvinced, since Glickman concedes that the Eight-Hour-Movement did not reject producerism, but managed to change it. Glickman, Lawrence B., A Living Wage: American Workers and the Making of Consumer Society, Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press 1997, p. 105. See also Schneirov, Richard/ Stromquist, Shelton/ Salvatore, Nick, The Pullman Strike and the Crisis of the 1890s: Essays on Labor and Politics, Urbana: University of Illinois Press 1999, in which Stromquist explains in how far producerist ideology was still alive and kicking in the 1890s. Ibidem, pp. 179-203.

tions in order to extent their suprematist control over the Freedpeople's labor and to integrate them into what was to become the sharecropper economy of the late 19th century.

The introduction of formal marriages with a male head of household strengthened the position of the male "breadwinner" within the production unit of the family and laid the groundwork for a labor system in the South that would serve the interests of the former plantation owners. Ironically, I argue, the Freedmen's Bureau established a labor system in the South that deteriorated into peonage in the course of Reconstruction and the Gilded Age. Since the Republican administrations of Abraham Lincoln, Andrew Johnson and Ulysses S. Grant lacked the political will to establish a class of independent black yeoman farmers by confiscating the lands of the disloyal plantation owners, and because the government did not confront the brutal extralegal violence to which white Republicans and African Americans in the South were exposed, the "free labor" system collapsed and made way for a new form of bondage by economic exploitation.

3. The Port Royal Experiment and the Freedmen's Bureau

In January 1865, Union General William Tecumseh Sherman had set aside for black settlement the Sea Islands off the South Carolina coast and part of the coast south of Charleston. He devised the plan to relieve himself of the burden of thousands of impoverished Blacks who trailed desperately after his army. By June 1865, some 40,000 Freedmen sat on 400,000 acres of "Sherman land". In addition, in March 1865, Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands.

The most immediate problem facing the nation at the end of the Civil War lay in the South, where food and services were in short supply and mounting numbers of freed people were walking off plantations with little more than what they wore or could carry. The sheer magnitude of human need threatened to overwhelm the resources of the U.S. Army and the federal government.[10] Initially during the war, private groups had taken on much of the relief work, feeding, clothing, counseling and providing education to freed people and poor Whites. One of the earliest and most successful social welfare projects was begun early in the war by these organizations on islands off the Atlantic coast from Charleston, South Carolina to Savannah, Georgia. It was called the Port Royal Experiment after one of those islands.[11] In November 1861, island planters had

[10] United States, Army, Dept. of Virginia and North Carolina, and Dept. of Negro Affairs, Report of the Superintendent of Negro Affairs in North Carolina 1864, Boston, MA: W. F. Brown, Printers 1865.

[11] Rose, Willie Lee Nichols, Rehearsal for Reconstruction: The Port Royal Experiment, Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press 1999. Washington, Delo E., Education of Freedmen and the Role of Self-Help in a Sea Island Setting, 1862-1982, in: Agricultural History, 58/3 (1984), pp. 442-455. Cimbala,

fled before the occupation of U.S. troops, and ten thousand slaves were suddenly free. Beginning the following spring, thousands of men and women who were teachers, missionaries, medical professionals and legal advisors, mainly abolitionists, came south from New England, New York and Pennsylvania to minister to the needs of the freed people.[12] Their devotion to the people saved lives and educated thousands, and their letters to friends and colleagues in the North gained enthusiasm and assistance for their work. Their efforts also encouraged the public support that came in March 1865 when the Congress established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, known simply as the Freedmen's Bureau, and placed it in the War Department.[13]

Congress left no doubt about the duties and tasks set for the Freedmen's Bureau. It established the FB in order to "[…supervise and manage] all abandoned lands, and [to] control […] all subjects relating to refugees and Freedmen from rebel states, or from any district of country within the territory embraced in the operations of the army, under such rules and regulations as may be prescribed by the head of the bureau and approved by the President."[14]

The Secretary of War was to "[…] direct such issues of provisions, clothing, and fuel, as he may deem needful for the immediate and temporary shelter and supply of destitute and suffering refugees and Freedmen and their wives and children, under such rules and regulations as he may direct."[15] Loyal refugees and Freedmen should be provided with "[…] such tracts of land within the insurrectionary states as shall have been abandoned, or to which the United States shall have acquired title by confiscation or sale, or otherwise, and to every male citizen, whether refugee or freedman, as aforesaid, there shall be assigned not more than forty acres of such land […]"[16]

The Freedmen's Bureau (FB) expanded the work of private charities both programmatically and geographically, opening local offices to extend aid to former slaves and to white war refugees throughout the South. The Freedmen's Bureau issued food rations of corn meal, flour, and sugar to 150,000 people during its first year. It oversaw thousands of schools, and helped former slaves negotiate labor contracts, legalize marriages, become taxpayers, voters, business operators and landowners. Freedmen's Bureau officials took complaints from

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Paul A., The Freedmen's Bureau, the Freedmen, and Sherman's Grant in Reconstruction Georgia, 1865-1867, in: The Journal of Southern History, 55/4 (1984), pp. 597-632. Ochiai, Akiko, The Port Royal Experiment Revisited: Northern Visions of Reconstruction and the Land Question, in: The New England Quarterly, 74/1 (2001), pp. 94-117.

[12] Willie Lee Rose, Rehearsal for Reconstruction, New York: Random House, 1964.

[13] Lieberman, Robert C., The Freedmen's Bureau and the Politics of Institutional Structure, in: Social Science History, 18/3 (1994), pp. 405-437. Lowe, Richard, The Freedmen's Bureau and Local Black Leadership, in: The Journal of American History, 80/3 (1993), pp. 989-998. Lowe, Richard, The Freedmen's Bureau and Local White Leaders in Virginia, in: The Journal of Southern History, 64/3 (1998), pp. 455-472.

[14] Sanger, George P. (ed.), Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America, vol. 13, Boston, 1866, pp. 507–509, p. 507.

[15] Ibidem.

[16] Ibidem.

former slaves who were victimized by former slaveholders, negotiated with Whites, and tried to resolve community and family conflicts among Blacks.[17]

With limited resources and unreliable political support, the Freedman's Bureau attempted to reconstruct the social system as well as the economic and political system in the South. This involved many difficulties and uncertainties. Most black people had definite ideas about the meaning of freedom, and at least in the short run, it meant being freed from the place they had been bound to by slavery. Some planters lamented the "disloyalty" of their former slaves whom they saw as "deserting" the plantation when their labor was desperately needed. Some U.S. Army officers observed that multitudes of black people were wandering the roads as "vagabonds", confirming white fears that freed slaves would become an idle, vagrant people who would only work if compelled.[18] In reality, many people went in search of family and friends who had been sold away from them during the years of slavery. Former slaves walked hundreds of miles, following rumors that loved ones resided in some distant place and hoping to reunite their families. Under these circumstances, the Freedman's Bureau was under great pressure to stabilize the southern work force, reverse the flow of former slaves from plantations to southern cities, and rebuild the agricultural system. Thus, bureau officials expended a great deal of effort persuading former slaves to sign labor contracts with planters.

The FB was responsible in helping to establish the shift from free or wage labor at the end of the Civil War to the sharecropping system, which was little more than a concealed and modernized from of slavery, albeit not chattel slavery. In addition to the expectation the Freedmen's Bureau was supposed to reintegrate the alleged vagabonds into a system of profitable work, the Bureau also transformed many hitherto non-respected or non-legal forms of marriage and partnership into marriages that were acknowledged and protected by law. It is my contention that the successful transfer of non-legal partnerships to official marriages laid the groundwork for an introduction of sharecropping. Secondly, I will demonstrate how open and terrorist violence and intimidation by Southern landowners and the Ku Klux Klan increased the odds in favor of the sharecropping system.

[17] Foner, Eric, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877, New York: Perennial Classics 2002. Schweninger, Loren, Toward a Deeper Understanding of Reconstruction: The Freedman's Bureau, the Republican Party, and Northern Opinion in Post-Civil War America, in: Reviews in American History, 22/1 (1994), pp. 82-84.

[18] Edwards, Laura F., The Problem of Dependency: African Americans, Labor Relations, and the Law in the Nineteenth-Century South, in: Agricultural History, 72/2 (1998), pp. 313-340.

4. The African American Quest for Autonomy

Although white politicians had difficulty agreeing to a meaning of freedom, ex-slaves never had any doubt about what they wanted it to mean. They had only to contemplate what they had been denied as slaves. Slaves had to remain on their plantations; freedom allowed Blacks to go wherever they pleased. Thus, in the first exhilarating weeks after emancipation, Freedmen often abandoned their plantations just to see what was on the other side of the hill and to feel freedom under their feet. Slaves had to be at work in the fields by dawn; freedom permitted Blacks to taste the forbidden pleasure of sleeping through a sunrise. Slaves had to defer to Whites; freedom saw them test the etiquette of racial subordination. "Rosetta Lizzie's maid, passed me today when I was coming from church without speaking to me, she was really elegantly dressed, in King Street Style."[19]

To Whites, it looked like pure anarchy. Without the discipline of slavery, they said, Blacks had reverted to their natural condition: lazy, irresponsible, and wild. Actually, former slaves were experimenting with freedom, in both trivial and profound ways. But poor black people could not long afford to roam the countryside, neglect work, and casually provoke Whites. Soon, most were back on plantations, at work in the fields and kitchens. But other items on ex-slaves' agenda of freedom endured. Freedmen did not easily give up their quest for economic independence. In addition, slavery had deliberately kept Blacks illiterate, and Freedmen emerged from bondage eager to read and write. Moreover, bondage had denied slaves secure family lives and the ability to worship openly as they saw fit. Consequently, families and religion became areas of persistent black aspiration.

4.1 Marriage

Although slave marriages and family relations had existed only at the master's whim, slaves had nevertheless managed to create deep, enduring family bonds. Still, slave sales had often severed family ties. As a consequence, thousands of black men and women took to the roads in 1865 to look for relations who had been sold away. One northern newspaperman encountered an elderly freedman who had walked six hundred miles to North Carolina, where he had heard that his wife and children had been sold.[20] Couples who emerged from slavery with their marriages intact often rushed to northern military chaplains or to the Freedmen's Bureau to legalize their unions.

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[19] Quoted in Jenkins, Wilbert L., Seizing the New Day: African Americans in Post-Civil War Charleston, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press 1998, p. 42.

[20] Greene, Meg, Into the Land of Freedom: African Americans in Reconstruction, Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Co. 2004, p. 36.

The end of slavery saw families abandon the slave quarters and scatter over plantations, building separate cabins on the patches of land they rented. In independent households, far from Whites, black families escaped white intrusion. Parents no longer had to endure interference in the raising of their children. Women were less vulnerable to violation by masters and their sons. Some wives were able to exchange field labour for housework. Whites claimed that they were "acting the lady", but what Whites meant was that black women were not acting like slaves. Instead, they behaved like mothers and housewives, occupied with the same arduous domestic chores as poor white women. Extreme poverty eventually forced most black women back into the cotton fields (at least at picking time) or into white kitchens. Nevertheless, safe and secure families ranked high on every ex-slave's list of freedom's blessings.

LeeAnn Whites has analyzed gender relations in the South after the Civil War as persisting in a state of "crisis". In doing so, she focused on the gender dynamics between members of the white upper and middle classes exclusively. African Americans do not figure at all in her important contribution.[21] Until today, an analysis of gender relations among African Americans immediately after the Civil War remains to be undertaken. While it is true that ex-slaves yearned to be united with their loved-ones and wished their unions to be acknowledged and protected by the state, this does not necessarily mean that they followed the ideals of white run-of-the-mill heterosexual monogamous gender relations. The FB, however, took it for granted that African Americans wished to subject themselves to the imperatives of Victorian marriage.[22] The Freedmen's Bureau's understanding of marriage and gender was confined by the standards of white northern officers, deeply entrenched in the protector and provider-model of upper and middle class respectability and the ideology of the two separate spheres.[23]

While the principal centre of attention of the Freedmen's Bureau was to provide aid and assist Freedmen in becoming self-reliant, the Bureau was also interested in formalizing marriages that Freedmen had entered into during slavery. Slave marriages had no legal foundation or protection. Slave husbands and wives, without legal recourse, could be separated and sold as their owners saw appropriate. Couples who resided on different plantations were only allowed to visit with the consent of their masters. Often without the benefit of clergy, "the marriage ceremony in most cases consisted of the slaves' simply getting the

[21] Whites, LeeAnn, The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender: Augusta, Georgia, 1860-1890, Athens: University of Georgia Press 1995.

[22] Finley, Randy, From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen's Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869, Fayetteville, AR: University of Arkansas Press 1996, pp. 36-45.

[23] Farmer, Mary J., "Because They Are Women": Gender and the Virginia Freedmen's Bureau's "War on Dependency", in: Cimbala, Paul A./ Miller, Randall M. (eds.), The Freedmen's Bureau and Reconstruction: Reconsiderations, New York: Fordham University Press 1999, pp. 161-192. The whole barrage of arguments why freedpeople had to fit into the hegemonial model of marriage and family is given in Fisk, Clinton Bowen, Plain Counsels for Freedmen: In Sixteen Brief Lectures, Boston: American Tract Society 1866.

master's permission and moving into a cabin together."[24] When freedom came, many sought to remarry and to make permanent long-standing relations, while others attempted to marry for the first time. They all sought help from Union Army clergy, Northern missionaries, and the Freedmen's Bureau.

Oliver Otis Howard, one of the least prejudiced officers in the service of the FB, clearly described the services rendered by the FB: "Of the thousand things that the Bureau has done no balance sheet can ever be made. How it helped the ministries of the church, […] instructed all the people in the meaning of the law, threw itself against the stronghold of intemperance,[…] brought about amicable relations between employer and employed, […] corrected bad habits among Whites and Blacks, restored order, sustained contracts for work, […] furthered local educational movements, gave sanctity to the marriage relation, dignified labor, strengthened men and women in good resolutions, […] ennobled the home, […] set idlers at work, […] who shall ever tell?"[25]

"The unity of families, and all the rights of the family relation, were to be carefully guarded. In places where the local statutes make no provisions for the marriage of persons of color, the assistant commissioners were authorized to designate officers who should keep a record of marriages, which might be solemnized by any ordained minister of the gospel, who was to make a return of the same, with such items as were required for registration at places designated. Registrations already made by United States officers were carefully preserved."[26]

A typical marriage certificate would name husband and wife by their legal names and places of residence and confirm that the couple had been "lawfully joined in Holy Wedlock" on a day given in the document. It usually included wishes like the following one: "May the God of all enable you faithfully to fulfil [sic] the solemn covenant made in His presence, and after having lived together in a state of great joy and pious friendship may you meet in Heaven in perfect happiness never to be terminated." The signature of an Army chaplain, officer or pastor would testify that the document was original.[27]

It is obvious, however, that the implementation of formalized marriage carried with it not only the expectations of the Freedpeople, but was heavily burdened with Victorian white middle class concepts of partnership and matrimony. Convinced that "the sacred institution of Marriage lies at the very founda-

[24] Blassingame, John W., The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South, New York: Oxford University Press 1979, pp. 77-78. See also Gutman, Herbert George, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925, New York: Pantheon Books 1976.
[25] Howard, Oliver Otis, Autobiography of Oliver Otis Howard, Major General, United States Army, New York: The Baker & Taylor Company 1907, 2 vols., vol. 2, pp. 440-441.
[26] Howard, Autobiography, vol. 2, p. 223.
[27] Berlin, Ira/ Reidy, Joseph P./ Rowland, Leslie S., Freedom's Soldiers: The Black Military Experience in the Civil War, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press 1998, p. 80.

tion of all civil society", FB officials outlined the duties of married couples and who was eligible to marry and to perform the ceremonies.[28] In the resulting marriages the husband was the head of household and according to Common Law he determined how and where the family household would work. By introducing marriage as a defining factor for agrarian production on leased land, former slave owners effectively replaced the slave driver on a large plantation with the husband who oversaw the labor of his wife and children.[29]

In cases in which husband and wife had been living on separate plantations, the wife was now forced by the FB to live with the husband: "Ben Davis. […] Farm of David [T]ayman Has a wife & 5 children on the Farm of Mr Davis, Lives on the farm of Mr [T]ayman & works for him: Mr [T]ayman agrees to have him bring his family to the farm – Mr Davis wants him to do so – He, Ben, desires to do so himself – But the woman does not wish to go – Decision that the wife of Ben must go with him to the farm where he is living"[30]

The importance of this arrangement of gendered power becomes obvious when we look at the quotidian practice of settling accounts between sharecropper and landlord. This has been brilliantly illustrated in "Frankie Mae", a short story written by Jean Wheeler Smith.[31] This is a story of a young girl growing up in the South as the daughter of a sharecropper. Her awareness of the injustices of such a system prompts her to keep records of all family earnings and expenditures for the entire year. She eventually challenges the white owner's records when they do not coincide with her account. After being verbally abused and physically threatened by the white owner, she calls on her father. His failure to come to her aid changed her whole life.[32] Knowing that resistance against white faulty mathematics is likely to result in loss of limb or life, husbands and fathers acquiesced and enforced the labor regimen imposed on the family production unit. Other than in the Northern parts of the US, where the market revolution has shifted the importance of the family as productive unit to the factory and the workplace outside the household, Black sharecropping farmers in the South had to maintain a system, in which the husband acted as the mediated cen-

[28] South Carolina Assistant Commissioner Rufus Saxton, Headquarters, Assistant Commissioner for South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida, General Orders Number 8, August 11, 1865, RG 105, National Archives Record Administration (NARA). The "marriage rules", filed with Unbound Miscellaneous Records, 1865–1868, have been reproduced in M869, roll 44.

[29] There were always more women and children than men, which resulted in a large group of the population that was not integrated in nuclear families with a male head of household and provider. Abandonment rates were high. Freedwomen with children and no husband present found it especially difficult to find employment. Farmer, "Because They Are Women". Schwalm, Leslie A., A Hard Fight for We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press 1997, pp. 234-268.

[30] Hahn, Steven (ed.), Land and Labor, 1865, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 2008.

[31] Printed in [Anonymous], The World Outside: Collected Short Fiction about Women at Work, New York: Four Winds Press 1977.

[32] Greenberg, Kenneth S., Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, the Proslavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1996, pp. 67-69.

ter of familial and labor-related authority.[33] Needless to mention that this paternalization of racism in the Reconstruction South carried with it the sexualization of racism and the gendering of violence, as has been demonstrated by Lisa Cardyn.[34]

4.2 Worship and Education

Despite the creation of the FB by an act of Congress, the American Government did not fund it for the first year. Missionary and aid societies instead supported the FB in its initial stage and worked in conjunction with it in order to provide education for former slaves. The American Missionary Association was particularly important. It established eleven colleges in former Confederate states for the education of Freedpeople. The Freedmen's Aid Society (FAS), organized by the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), also helped to provide education and mission work. In 1868, the FAS reported their attempts to offer education and Christian mission in glowing terms. In 1875, after the FB had ceased to exist and with Reconstruction nearing its inglorious end, the assessment of the FAS's achievements was much more realistic.[35]

The aid societies raised funds to pay teachers and manage schools, while the day-to-day operation of individual schools was only a secondary goal. After 1866, Congress appropriated funds to use in the Freedmen's schools. The main source of educational revenue for these schools came through a Congressional Act that gave the Freedmen's Bureau the power to seize Confederate property for educational use. Over the years, the FB spent approximately five million Dollars to create schools for former slaves. By the end of 1865, more than 90,000 Freedpeople (that is less than 2.5 percent) had enrolled as students in public schools. Attendance rates at the new schools for Freedmen were high, however: between 79 and 82 percent.

Another hunger that freedom permitted African Americans to satisfy was that for independent worship. Under slavery, Blacks had often been compelled to pray with Whites in biracial churches. Full expression of black spirituality could be found only in the dead of night in secret religious services. Intent on religious independence, Blacks greeted freedom with a mass exodus from white churches. Some joined the newly established southern branches of all-black

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[33] Carole Shammas, Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective, in: The William and Mary Quarterly, 52/1 (1995), pp. 104-144, 130-135.

[34] Lisa Cardyn, Sexualized Racism/Gendered Violence: Outraging the Body Politic in the Reconstruction South, in: Michigan Law Review, 100/4 (2002), pp. 675-867.

[35] [Methodist Episcopal Church], Reports of the Aid Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Cincinnati, OH: Western Methodist Book Concern, 1893, in: Gaustad, Edwin S./ Noll, Mark A., A Documentary History of Religion in America to 1877, Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub 2003, p. 585. A full reprint of the text is found in Schlup, Leonard C./ Blochowiak, Mary Ann (eds.), Contemporary Observations of American Religion in the 1870s: Pulpits and Polemics, Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press 2008, chapter 23.

northern churches, such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Others formed black versions of the major southern denominations, Baptists and Methodists. On the eve of the war, 42,000 Blacks had worshiped in biracial Methodist churches in South Carolina; by 1870, all but 600 had left. Slaves had viewed their tribulations through the lens of their deeply felt Christian faith, and Freedmen comprehended the events of the Civil War and Reconstruction as people of faith. It was not surprising that ex-slaves claimed Abraham Lincoln as their Moses.

The Freedmen's Bureau reflected the values of Protestant Christianity that were prevalent in the last third of the 19th century. Despite being a government institution, the FB promoted Christianity among the Freedpeople. The aforementioned General Oliver Otis Howard, the FB's Commissioner, played a major role in the creation of Howard University, not only because he wanted to make higher education accessible to African Americans but because he saw in this University a possibility to teach the gospel.[36] Howard University was, at the onset, conceived of as a theological seminary for Congregationalists to which was added "some industrial features", as Howard reminiscenced.[37]

Contemporaries did not perceive a divide between education and religion. The New Orleans Tribune, a radical black paper, wrote that the majority of Blacks "[…] newly acquainted with blessings of freedom, do not only need an intellectual education, but a religious guidance, too."[38]

5. Violence and Intimidation

Many Freedpeople asserted their right to possess the lands they had worked as slaves. At war's end, there were a few politicians and military men who urged that freed people be provided with small farms carved from the tens of thousands of acres of land that had been abandoned by Confederate plantation owners. This would have established an independent class of African Americans and the foundation for a black southern economy less dependent on the largess of the federal government or the goodwill of Whites. National wealth notwithstanding, none but the most radical Republicans considered permanently redistributing confiscated Confederate land to former slaves. The strength of southern sentiment to which Congress acquiesced extended even to selling land to African Americans.[39]

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[36] On Howard's Christianity, which led to his moniker "Christian Soldier" see Carpenter, John A. Sword/ Olive Branch, Oliver, Otis Howard, New York: Fordham University Press 1999, pp. 24-25.
[37] Gaustad/ Noll, A Documentary History, p. 583.
[38] Tunnell, Crucible of Reconstruction, p. 87.
[39] Reid, Whitelaw, After the War: A Southern Tour. May 1, 1865, to May 1, 1866, Cincinnati, New York: Moore, Wilstach & Baldwin 1866, pp. 564-565, in: Harris, William Hamilton (ed.), The Harder We Run: Black Workers since the Civil War, New York: Oxford University Press 1982, p. 9.

Andrew Johnson, the new President, a former owner of slaves and a Democrat, was even more resistant than Congress to the idea of redistributing land to Blacks. President Johnson had controlled the process of reconstruction in the months immediately after Abraham Lincoln's assassination and had proven himself willing to concede power to the defeated Confederates. Former slave holders asserted their authority over former slaves with special laws called *Black Codes* that restricted Blacks' movements, their economic and political opportunities and their civil rights. Racially discriminatory vagrancy laws reduced black workers to near slave conditions. Congress was so outraged by the apparent attempt to continue old relationships under new names that moderate Republicans united with radicals to wrest control from the president and institute their more liberal congressional reconstruction. This Radical Reconstruction as it is sometimes called, extended education for Blacks, protected black voting rights, and encouraged Blacks to hold political office. Yet, most African Americans remained landless, and the few Blacks who had been settled on confiscated land soon found themselves dispossessed. Hopes that the government would deliver "forty acres and a mule" were dashed on hard political reality. Congress voted to return almost all Confederate land to prewar owners, leaving the economic power structure of the South largely intact. There were temporary political gains, but without the provision of land to freed people, emancipation could bring no fundamental or lasting economic change.[40]

In the summer of 1866, six Confederate veterans in Pulaski, Tennessee, founded the Ku Klux Klan. By the spring of 1868, when congressional Reconstruction went into effect, new groups or "dens" of the Ku Klux Klan had sprouted throughout the South.

All of this could happen despite the Freedmen's Bureau's continued existence in the rebel states and the presence of Union troops notwithstanding. The number of Union troops in the South during Reconstruction had been reduced as the immediate interest in the problems of the rebellious states had dwindled. Whereas right after the war, there had been 85.000 black troops that were stationed in the former Confederacy, in October of 1869 the overall strength of all troops had been trimmed down to 11.000 men. In 1872 this number had fallen to a mere 7.000, hardly enough to suppress rioters and Klansmen in one state, not to speak of the whole Confederacy.[41]

According to former Confederate general and Georgia Democratic politician John B. Gordon, the Klan owed its popularity to the "instinct of self-protection […] the sense of insecurity and danger, particularly in those

[40] Litwack, Been in the Storm So Long, p. 402. Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, pp. 392-411.

[41] Zuczek, Richard, Encyclopedia of the Reconstruction Era, Westport, CN: Greenwood Press 2006, 2 vols., vol. 1, p. 86. Coakley, Robert W., The Role of Federal Military Forces in Domestic Disorders, 1789-1878, Washington, DC: G.P.O. 1989, p. 295.

neighborhoods where the Negro population largely predominated."[42] And he continued, that among the reasons for the organization of the KKK, "[t]he first and main reason was the organization of the Union League, as they called it, about which we knew nothing more than this: that the negroes would desert the plantations, and go off at night in large numbers; and on being asked where they had been, would reply, sometimes, 'We have been to the muster;' sometimes, 'We have been to the lodge;' sometimes, 'We have been to the meeting.' These things were observed for a great length of time. We knew that the 'carpet-baggers,' as the people called these men who came from a distance and had no interest at all with us, who were unknown to us entirely; who from all we could learn about them did not have any very exalted position at their homes — these men were organizing the colored people. We knew that beyond all question. We knew of certain instances where great crime had been committed; where overseers had been driven from plantations, and the negroes had asserted their right to hold the property for their own benefit."[43]

Everywhere Whites looked, he said, they saw "great crime". Republican politicians organized ignorant Freedmen and marched them to the polls, where they blighted honest government. Blacks drove overseers from plantations and claimed the land for themselves. Black robbers and rapists made white women cower behind barred doors. It was necessary, Gordon declared, "in order to protect our families from outrage and preserve our own lives, to have something that we could regard as a brotherhood-a combination of the best men of the country, to act purely in self-defense."[44] According to Gordon and other conservative white Southerners, then, Klansmen were good men who stepped forward to do their duty, men who wanted nothing more than to guard their families and defend decent society from the assaults of degraded ex-slaves and a vindictive Republican Party.

Behind the Klan's high-minded rhetoric, however, lay another agenda. It was revealed in their actions, not their words. Klansmen embarked on a crusade to reverse history. Garbed in robes and hoods, Klansmen engaged in terrorist guerrilla warfare against free labor, civil equality, and political democracy. They aimed at terrorizing ex-slaves and white Republicans into submission. As the South's chief terrorist organization between 1868 and 1871, the Klan whipped, burned, and shot in the name of white supremacy. Changes in four particular areas of southern life proved flash points for Klan violence: racial etiquette, education, labor, and politics. The Klan punished those Blacks and Whites guilty of breaking the Old South's racial code. The Klan considered "impudence" a punishable offense. Asked to define "impudence" before a congressional investigating committee, one white opponent of the Klan responded: "Well, it is con-

[42] Thompson, C. Mildred, Reconstruction in Georgia: Economic, Social, Political, 1865-1872, New York: Columbia University Press 1915, p. 390.
[43] Thompson, Reconstruction in Georgia, p. 390.
[44] See also the reminiscences of Rebecca Latimer Felton, Country Life in Georgia in the Days of My Youth, http://docsouth.unc.edu/fpn/felton/felton.html, accessed 1.12.2009.

sidered impudence for a negro not to be polite to a white man not to pull off his hat and bow and scrape to a white man, as was done formerly."[45] Klansmen whipped Blacks for crimes that ranged from speaking disrespectfully to refusing to yield the sidewalk to raising a good crop to dressing well. Black women who dressed up "like ladies" risked a midnight visit from the Klan. The Ku Klux Klan sought to restore racial subordination in every aspect of private and public life.

Klansmen also took aim at black education. White men, especially those with little schooling, found the sight of Blacks in classrooms hard to stomach. Schools were easy targets, and scores of them went up in flames. Teachers, male and female, were flogged, or worse. Klansmen drove the northern-born teacher Alonzo B. Corliss from North Carolina for "teaching niggers and making them like white men."[46] The Klan executed an Irish-born teacher along with four black men in Cross Plains, Alabama. But not just ill-educated Whites opposed black education. Planters wanted ex-slaves back in the fields, not at desks. Each student meant one less laborer. In Georgia, where the Klan spread during 1867 and 1868, it was politically very effective. In Louisiana, the growth of the organization was curtailed by the existence of another organization with the same aims and tactics.

The Knights of the White Camelia carried Louisiana for Democrat Horatio Seymore in the 1868 election in a way that was unparalleled in the history of Reconstruction. In twenty-nine of Louisiana's 48 parishes, the Knights' intimidation and control of the Republican voters was so complete, that Seymore outpolled Republican president Grant 64.097 to 6.118, which represented 91 percent of the vote. "Intimidation" is but a meek word for the tactics applied by the KWC. Louisiana experienced a red wave of murder going through the state between April and November 1868. The FB reported 297 murders committed between September and November alone. A committee, installed by the state legislature, counted 784 murders in that period, whereas the FB calculated more than one thousand during the whole year. [47]

Planters turned to the Klan as part of their effort to preserve plantation agriculture and restore labor discipline. An Alabama white admitted that in his area, the Klan was "intended principally for the negroes who failed to work."[48] Masked bands violently punished Negroes whose landlords had complained of them. Sharecroppers who disputed their share at "settling up time" risked a visit from the night riders. Klansmen murdered a Georgia blacksmith who refused to

[45] Thompson, Reconstruction in Georgia, p. 364.
[46] United States, Congress, Senate, and Select Committee to Investigate Alleged Outrages in the Southern States. Report on the Alleged Outrages in the Southern States, Washington: G.P.O 1871, p. 145.
[47] Dauphine, James G., The Knights of the White Camelia and the Election of 1868: Louisiana's White Terrorists. A Benighting Legacy, in: Louisiana History, 30/2 (1989), pp. 173-190, p. 175f.
[48] Royce, Edward Cary, The Origins of Southern Sharecropping, Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1993, p. 70.

do additional work for a white man until he was paid for a previous job. It was dangerous for Freedmen to consider changing employers. In Marengo County, Alabama, when the Klan heard that some local Blacks were planning to leave, "the disguised men went to them and told them if they undertook it they would be killed on their way."

Whites had decided that they would not be "deprived of their labor."[49] Above all the Klan terrorized Republican leaders and voters. Klansmen became the military arm of the Democratic Party. They drove Blacks from the polls on Election Day and terrorized black officeholders. Klansmen gave Andrew Flowers, a black politician in Chattanooga, a brutal beating and told him that they "did not intend any nigger to hold office in the United States." [50]

It proved hard to arrest Klansmen and harder still to convict them. "If a white man kills a colored man in any of the counties of this State", observed a Florida sheriff, "you cannot convict him".[51] By 1871, the death toll had reached thousands. Federal intervention in the Ku Klux Klan Acts of 1870 and 1871 signaled an end to much of the Klan's power but not to counterrevolutionary violence in the South. Other groups continued the terror. The organization of political terrorist groups made it extremely difficult to enforce black civil rights laws. There were many groups such as the Knights of the White Camelia or the Pale Faces.[52] These groups attempted to impose social, economic and political control on former slaves and their allies by intimidating voters and enforcing the southern racial etiquette. They punished White Republicans for political activities and black sharecroppers for questioning white landlords, besieged black businesses for being too competitive, attacked black students for displaying too much intelligence, and assaulted white people for encouraging black aspirations. One of the witnesses, Henry B. Whitfield, the mayor of Columbus, Mississippi,

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[49] United States, Congress; Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States. Report of the Joint Select Committee Appointed to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, so far as Regards the Execution of Laws, and the Safety of the Lives and Property of the Citizens of the United States and Testimony Taken, Washington: Government Printing Office 1872. 13 vols, vol. 3, p. 1466.

[50] United States, Congress, Joint Select Committee on the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States. Report of the Joint Select Committee, vol. 13, p. 42.

[51] United States, Congress, Report of the Joint Select Committee to Inquire Into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States: Made to the Two Houses of Congress February 19, 1872, Washington DC: Government Printing Office 1872, p. 125.

[52] Although the KKK claimed to be a secret organization, the public was aware of their terrorist activities. [Anonymous], The Masked Lady of the White House or, The Ku-Klux-Klan: A Most Startling Exposure, Philadelphia, PA: C.W. Alexander 1868. This pamphlet apparently was translated into German: [Anonymous], Die maskir[e]te Dame des Weissen Hauses oder, Der Ku-Klux-Klan, Philadelphia, PA 1868. Dixon, Edward H., The Terrible Mysteries of the Ku-Klux-Klan: A Full Expose of the Forms, Objects, and "Dens" of the Secret Order: With a Complete Description of Their Initiation. From the Confession of a Member, New York 1868. Recent research emphasizes the aspects of terrorism: Martinez, J. Michael, Carpetbaggers, Cavalry, and the Ku Klux Klan: Exposing the Invisible Empire during Reconstruction, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield 2007. Smallwood, James/ Howell, Kenneth Wayne/ Taylor, Carol C., The Devil's Triangle: Ben Bickerstaff, Northeast Texans, and the War of Reconstruction, Lufkin, Texas: Best of East Texas Publishers 2007.

who was called before a congressional committee on the outrages committed by the Ku Klux Klan said in 1871: "I mean that if a white man, an old citizen of the county, is known to be a member of the republican party, the people are very intolerant toward him; and if a northern man who has come there is a republican they are a little worse toward him; and toward the black people, unless they are willing to vote as the people there desire them to vote, they are very intolerant."[53] And the same witness continued, referring to an African American, who was whipped by Klan members:

"The victim was a negro named James Hicks […] It was charged that […] he had used some improper language in regard to some white ladies of the neighborhood; and these people determined, I suppose, that he should suffer for it. He had moved down some seven miles below that, into another neighborhood. They found out where he lived, followed him down there, and took him out one night. From the best information I could get, there were from one hundred to one hundred and twenty disguised men, who were armed heavily. They took him out into the public road and whipped him. The statements of the witnesses varied considerably as to the amount of whipping he received. The lowest estimate that I heard was three hundred lashes; some of the black people who were present thought it was as high as one thousand. I have no doubt myself, from the man's appearance two days afterward, and from the evidence in the case, that he was very severely beaten."[54]

Few white Southerners (and Northerners) accepted full emancipation; most refused to acknowledge black people as citizens and continued to treat them as property, albeit property at large. Most Whites in the South believed that their version of southern civilization must be protected by punishing any black person who showed signs of contesting their control. Punishment ran the gamut from individual beatings, whippings and rape to massacre.[55] The Klan targeted the churches and their ministers who bolstered black spirits and the schools and their teachers who educated black children. White Southerners had considered African Americans who could read and write dangerous, and educat-

[53] United States, Congress, Reports of Committees: 30th Congress, 1st session – 48th Congress, 2nd session, Washington DC: Government Printing Office 1872, p. 417.
[54] Ibidem.
[55] Postwar Anti-Black violence is documented in the 13-volume report by a congressional committee. US. Congress, The Joint Select Committee to Inquire into the Condition of Affairs in the Late Insurrectionary States, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., Washington, DC: Government Printing Office 1872. Mintz, Steven (ed.), African American Voices: The Life Cycle of Slavery, St. James, NY: Brandywine Press 1993, p. 166. Ira Berlin (ed.), Freedom: A Documentary History of Emancipation, 1861-1867, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1982, pp. 754-755. Shapiro, Herbert, White Violence and Black Response from Reconstruction to Montgomery, Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press 1988, p. 20. For the period before 1865 see Morris, Thomas D., Southern Slavery and the Law, 1619-1860, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press 1996, pp. 182-208, 303-321. As for "legal" punishments in the South after 1865 see Adamson, Christopher R., Punishment after Slavery: Southern State Penal Systems, 1865-1890, in: Social Problems, 30/5 (1983), pp. 555-569.

ing them had generally been prohibited. Rates of literacy among southern Whites, themselves, were low. Particularly to poor illiterate Whites, a black person with a superior education seemed to be a violation of the natural social order. Education, many argued would create false pride, raise unrealistic aspirations, and spoil them for the work for which they were destined. Underlying these fears was the threat of social equality and the belief that black men might demand access to white women as the badge of their equality. Southern white women had become the embodiment of southern civilization.[56] The slave system had given white men virtually free access to black women.[57] In the aftermath of emancipation, southern white men projected their desires and envisioned a post-revolutionary society where black men asserted the same privileges. This was the nightmare that gave rise to outrageous fantasies of racial menace and could bring even law abiding white people to justify the most shocking violence.[58]

Although the Klan drew its foot soldiers from the ranks of poor white Southerners, the southern planter aristocracy encouraged, condoned, and sometimes controlled their actions. Democratic leader Wade Hampton of South Carolina explained to his political colleagues that illegal action, even murder, in defense racial domination was completely acceptable.[59] This kind of rhetoric encouraged terrorist groups' violent action. A white witness, who supported the illegal actions of the KKK, reported: "The Ku Klux Klan was a necessary organization and did much to discharge [discourage] weak white men and ignorant Negroes from lowliness. When the Ku Klux Klan wished to get rid of an undesirable white man or Negro, they would put an empty coffin at the undesirable person's front door. It usually caused the warned one to disappear. Although not a Ku Klux, one night I witnessed a parade of white-sheeted riders and recognized my own horse in the parade. In the morning my horse was in his stable, as usual. I asked no questions about the occurrence until years afterward."[60] Another witnessed was more outspoken in regards to the practices of the KKK: "After the negroes were brought to jail, the Ku Klux went and asked for the keys. The sheriff and deputy went away leaving the keys behind. Of course, the Klansmen got the keys and went to where the negroes were and got them. They carried the keys back and placed them on the nail from which they had been taken! The negroes were carried to the hanging ground and hung to a big old hickory tree. […] Dr. Wallace Thompson pleaded for the life of one of the ne-

[56] Roberts, Giselle, The Confederate Belle, Columbia: University of Missouri Press 2003.
[57] White, Deborah G., Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South, New York: W.W. Norton 1999. Clinton, Catherine, Reconstructing Freedwomen, in: Clinton, Catherine/ Silber, Nina, (eds.), Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War, New York: Oxford University Press 1992, pp. 306-319. Edwards, Laura, Sexual Violence, Gender, Reconstruction, and the Extension of Patriarchy in Granville County, North Carolina, in: The North Carolina Historical Review 68/3 (1991), pp. 237-260.
[58] Litwack, Been in the Storm so Long, p. 486.
[59] Du Bois, W. E. B., Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880, New York: Atheneum 1973, p. 686.
[60] Ella E. Gooding, American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers'Project, 1936-1940, in: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html, accessed 01 October 2008.

groes, Jim Hardy, and he was not hung. He told of plans to kill every old and young white man and all the old white women in both Union and Chester Counties. They were going to capture the young white women. Jim was never killed and he stuck to the good white people until his death. A biggety [impudent, N.F.] negro in the bunch was buried alive at the hanging ground, and then his body was taken up and allowed to freeze on top of the ground. So many bullets were fired into the big hickory that it soon died."[61]

An estimated number of 125 Blacks in Aiken County, South Carolina were killed trying to vote, and in Hamburg, South Carolina, Whites assaulted black voters in a "cruel, bloodthirsty, wanton, and unprovoked" attack.[62] The pattern was the same in Louisiana, Mississippi, and everywhere Republicans were strong. In Kentucky alone, more than 100 Blacks were lynched in the first decade after the war. By the mid 1870s terrorist tactics were returning Democrats to power, and there were fewer and fewer protections for African Americans in the South.[63] A political compromise between Republicans and Democrats in the winter of 1877 brought Republican Rutherford B. Hayes into the White House in return for business investment in the South, the withdrawal of the few remaining U.S. occupying troops, and the informal understanding that southern Blacks would be left to the mercy of southern Democrats.[64]

In the South, Democratic politicians built a new structure of racial control to replace that lost to emancipation. They passed state and local laws to separate the races in public transportation and accommodations, in public education, and in public and private facilities. They also designed complicated restrictions to control or eliminate black voting. Literacy tests, tests of good conduct, poll taxes and a variety of other devices helped remove Blacks from the voting rolls and from political office. Called the era of Jim Crow, as the laws were called Jim Crow laws, legal racial segregation divided Blacks from Whites in nearly every public phase of life from the trivial to the significant.[65] Some of the old patterns

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[61] Elmer Turnage, American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers'Project, 1936-1940, in: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/wpaintro/wpahome.html, accessed 01 October 2008.

[62] Du Bois, Black Reconstruction, p. 687.

[63] Black Resistance could stem the tide for a while, but after the North abandoned African Americans in their quest for freedom, resistance broke down. Kinshasa, Kwando Mbiassi, Black Resistance to the Ku Klux Klan in the Wake of the Civil War, Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. 2006.

[64] Wright, George C., Racial Violence in Kentucky, 1865-1940: Lynchings, Mob Rule, and "Legal Lynchings", Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press 1990, p. 162. Peskin, Allan, Was There a Compromise of 1877, in: The Journal of American History, 60/1 (1973), pp. 63-75. Woodward, C. Vann, Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction, New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press 1991.

[65] George, Charles, Life under the Jim Crow Laws, San Diego: Lucent Books 2000. Howse, Jennifer, Reconstruction, New York: Weigl Publishers 2008. The Term Jim Crow goes back to the stereotyped representations of African Americans in Blackface plays of the 1830s. [Anonymous], Life of Jim Crow, Showing How He Got His Inspiration As a Poet the Number of Fathers Who Claimed Him When He Got Up in the World, Though None Would Own Him Before: The Magic Spring "Way in De Woods Ob Ole Kaintuck, Where De Little Fairy Told Him of His Futur Greatness and Consequence in De World": His Interview With Gineral Jackson, With a Whole Basket Full of Incidents Which Befel Him Before He Made His Grand Jump on the Stage! Philadelphia, PA: For sale, whole-

remained, as African Americans still performed intimate services for the white middle class and elite, cooking their food, cleaning their houses, and caring for their children. Blacks often lived conveniently near Whites, and they did much of the manual labor in fields and factories owned and operated by Whites. But Jim Crow laws enforced an unequal social status, and at the height of this era in the 20th century, all southern drinking fountains, public parks, swimming pools, hospitals, restaurants, movie theaters, and phone booths were segregated by race. As the nation turned its attention to the more northern concerns of industrialization, urbanization and immigration, the South was increasingly free to develop its own policies on race, and southern Blacks found themselves more isolated in poverty and powerlessness.

6. Sharecropping

African-American participation in southern politics was a revolutionary change, but it was only part of the change brought about by emancipation. Deviations from southern traditions governing everyday racial interactions angered and frightened southern Whites. Black political power in the Reconstruction South did not extend to the ability to make the changes in land policies that were needed for long-term economic and social transformation. Most Blacks were without land, so the best they could manage was to work for white landholders who had little cash but offered shares of the crop in return for their labor. Although sharecropping could conceivably have offered an approximation of the family farm, it most often led to debt peonage.[66] White landholders used both legal and extra-legal means to bind black sharecroppers to the land through real or contrived indebtedness. Impecunious sharecroppers were forced to rely on credit advanced against the next year's crop to purchase farming supplies. The seed, tools, and teams of mules or horses were purchased on credit, as were the food, clothing and other necessities that families needed to sustain themselves for the year. The farmers secured credit either at stores the landholder operated on his land or at independently owned stores in the vicinity. In either case, expenses were generally manipulated to the sharecropper's disadvantage. At the end of the year, when profits were figured and debts were settled, sharecroppers

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sale and retail by James M'Minn at No. 96 North Seventh Street, and at No. 44 Strawberry St, 1835. Haskins, James, Kathleen Benson, and Virginia Schomp, The Rise of Jim Crow. Drama of African-American History, Tarrytown, N.Y: Marshall Cavendish Benchmark, 2008. Litwack, Leon F., How Free Is Free? The Long Death of Jim Crow. The Nathan I. Huggins Lectures, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2009. Stockley, Grif, Ruled by Race Black/White Relations in Arkansas From Slavery to the Present, Fayetteville, AK: University of Arkansas Press 2009.

[66] Garrett and Xu attribute the spread of sharecropping to a higher productivity than individual owner-operated farming. The show that the output elasticity of sharecropped farms is higher than that of owner-operated farms on all occasions and that of rented farms on some occasions. Garrett, Martin A./ Xu, Zhenhui, The Efficiency of Sharecropping: Evidence from the Postbellum South, in: Southern Economic Journal, 69/3 (2003), pp. 578-595.

were likely to find themselves in debt. Their debts grew each year, and there was no authority to which they could appeal.[67] Sharecropping offered some independence compared to the gang labor system common under slavery, but the shift in power had been limited. Former slaves understood very well that they were farming the white man's land and were forced to play by the white man's rules.[68] Even during the late 1860s and 1870s when Republicans held political power, southern Democrats often had so much white popular support that the federal military could not protect Blacks' legal rights.[69]

The Freedmen's Bureau distributed food and clothing to destitute Southerners and eased the transition of Blacks from slaves to free persons.[70] Congress, however, also authorized the agency to divide abandoned and confiscated land into forty-acre plots, to rent them to Freedmen, and eventually to sell them "with such title as the United States can convey."[71] By June 1865, the bureau had situated nearly 10,000 black families on a half million acres that had been abandoned by fleeing South Carolina and Georgia planters. Hundreds of thousands of other ex-slaves eagerly anticipated getting farms of their own.

Despite the flurry of activity, wartime reconstruction had settled nothing. Two years of controversy had failed to produce agreement about whether the president or Congress had the authority to devise and direct policy or what proper policy should be. Lincoln had organized several new state governments, but Congress had not readmitted a single "reconstructed" state into the Union. There were hints that the price of defeat for the South would be a revolution in landholding, but the "compulsory free labor" system that emerged on plantations in the Mississippi valley suggested more continuity with antebellum traditions. Clearly, the nation faced dilemmas and difficulties almost as burdensome as

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[67] Litwack, Been in the Storm so Long, p. 448.

[68] Susan Mann shows how the change from chattel slavery to sharecropping affected the sexual inequalities within the African American household. Mann, Susan A., Slavery, Sharecropping, and Sexual Inequality, in: Signs, 14/4 (1989), pp. 774-798.

[69] Mintz, African American Voices, p. 170.

[70] Cimbala, Paul A., The Freedmen's Bureau: Reconstructing the American South after the Civil War. Anvil Series, Malabar, FL: Krieger Pub 2005. Schulman, Daniel/ Meryl, Treatner, The Freedmen's Bureau, New York: Macmillan/McGraw-Hill 2002.

[71] Section 4 of the act reads: „SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted*, That the commissioner, under the direction of the President, shall have authority to set apart, for the use of loyal refugees and freedmen, such tracts of land within the insurrectionary states as shall have been abandoned, or to which the United States shall have acquired title by confiscation or sale, or otherwise, and to every male citizen, whether refugee or freedman, as aforesaid, there shall be assigned not more than forty acres of such land, and the person to whom it was so assigned shall be protected in the use and enjoyment of the land for the term of three years at an annual rent not exceeding six per centum upon the value of such land, as it was appraised by the state authorities in the year eighteen hundred and sixty, for the purpose of taxation, and in case no such appraisal can be found, then the rental shall be based upon the estimated value of the land in said year, to be ascertained in such manner as the commissioner may by regulation prescribe. At the end of said term, or at any time during said term, the occupants of any parcels so assigned may purchase the land and receive such title thereto as the United States can convey, upon paying therefore the value of the land, as ascertained and fixed for the purpose of determining the annual rent aforesaid." United States, Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America, vol. 13 (Boston, 1866), pp. 507-509, p. 509.

those of the war. Reconstruction politics did not arise within a vacuum. Sharp dissatisfaction with conditions in the southern countryside politicized Blacks and fueled political upheaval. On farms and plantations, Freedmen confronted ex-masters who persisted in believing that Blacks were unfit for free labor. A Tennessee man declared two years after the end of the war that Blacks were unfit for labor without supervision by a master or overseer. Blacks responded that if any class was lazy, it was the masters: "[T]hey have lived in idleness all their lives on stolen labor and made savages of the colored people, but they now are so furious because they are proving themselves to be men, such as have come away and got some education."[72] Clashes occurred daily between ex-slaves who wished to take control of the conditions of their own labor and ex-masters who wanted to reinstitute old ways.

The system of agricultural labor that emerged in 1865 grew out of the labor program initiated during the war by the federal military. When the war ended, supervision shifted to the Freedmen's Bureau, which renewed the Army's campaign to restore production by binding black laborers and planters with wage contracts. Except for having to put down the whip and pay subsistence wages, planters were not required to offer many concessions to emancipation. Instead, they moved quickly to restore the antebellum world of work gangs, white overseers, field labor for black women and children, clustered cabins, minimal personal freedom, and even corporal punishment whenever they could get away with it.

The Freedmen's Bureau did not only serve as a platform that rendered services like food and shelter, but it also functioned as a court of law in a situation where courts had stopped to operate or as an institution that was required to mediate between the former slaves and their former owners. In Gordonsville, Virginia, for instance, the Freedmen's Bureau superintendent in charge intervened frequently in cases of extralegal whippings of Freedpeople by their former masters. Ex-slaves resisted every effort to roll back the dock. "The fact is, the colored people are very anxious to get land of their own to live upon independently", stated a Union League organizer, working for the successful election of Brister Reese and James K. Green, two former slaves, to the Alabama state legislature.[73] Disgusted planters confirmed that Freedmen wanted to become "landholders" and not "hirelings". Blacks were equally determined to end planters' involvement in their personal lives. They wanted, for example, to make their own decisions about whether women and children would labor in the fields. Indeed, within months after the war, black women (perhaps one-third of them) abandoned field labor and began working full time within their own

[72] Hannah Johnson to Hon. Mr. Lincoln, 31 July 1863, J-17 l863, Letters Received, ser. 360, Colored Troops Division, Adjutant General's Office, Record Group 94, NARA. Published in: Berlin/ Reidy/ Rowland, The Black Military Experience, pp. 582–583.

[73] Fitzgerald, Michael W., "To Give Our Votes to the Party": Black Political Agitation and Agricultural Change in Alabama, 1865-1870, in: The Journal of American History, 76/2 (1989), pp. 489-505, p. 498.

households. Moreover, hundreds of thousands of black children enrolled in school.

The Freedmen's dream of landownership never came true. Despite the ex-slaves' political agitation, Congress and southern legislatures refused to confiscate the planters' land. And without political intervention, landownership proved to be beyond the reach of all but a small fraction of Blacks. Poverty stricken Freedmen were lucky to have two nickels to rub together, and few white people would offer them credit to purchase real estate. Even Blacks who had money discovered that planters resisted selling them land. Whites who contemplated selling land to Blacks knew they risked midnight raids from unhappy neighbors. Without land, ex-slaves would have little choice but to work on plantations.

Although Blacks were forced to return to the planters' fields, Freedmen resisted efforts to restore slave-like conditions. By working fewer days and shorter hours, by boycotting annual contracts, by striking, and by abandoning the most reactionary employers, they sought to force concessions. A tug-of-war between white landlords and black laborers took place on thousands of farms and plantations and out of it emerged sharecropping, a new system of Southern agriculture.

Sharecropping was a compromise that offered both ex-masters and ex-slaves something but satisfied neither.[74] Under the new system, planters divided their cotton plantations into small farms of twenty-five to thirty acres that Freedmen rented, paying with a share of each year's crop, usually half. Sharecropping gave Blacks more freedom than labor gangs and released them from the day-to-day supervision of Whites. It meant that black families could now decide who would work, for how long, and how hard. Moreover, even half a crop seemed to promise a princely income after the subsistence of slavery and the puny wages of the Freedmen's Bureau's contract system. Still, most Blacks remained dependent on the white landlord, who retained the power to expel them at the end of each season. For planters, sharecropping offered a way to resume agricultural production, but it did not allow them to reinstitute the unified plantation system or to administer what they considered necessary discipline. An experiment at first, sharecropping spread quickly throughout the cotton South. By 1870, the old gang system, direct white supervision, and clustered black living quarters were fading memories. As increasing numbers of white yeomen lost their land in the downward spiral of postwar Southern agriculture, moreover, sharecropping ensnared small white farmers as well as black farmers.

[74] Mann, Slavery, Sharecropping, pp. 774-798.

7. Reconstruction Collapses

By 1870, after the failed impeachment of President Andrew Johnson and the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution, which gave African American men the right to vote, Northerners looked forward to putting "the Southern problem" behind them. They had written guarantees of civil and political rights for Blacks into the Constitution and enacted a program of political reunification that had restored ex-Confederate states to the Union. Now, after a decade of engagement with the public issues of war and reconstruction, they wanted to turn to their own affairs. In Washington, matters that had taken a back- seat to the Southern problem economic development, foreign policy, scandal and corruption clamored for attention. Increasingly, practical business-minded men came to the forefront of the Republican Party, replacing the band of reformers and idealists who had been prominent in the 1860s. Civil War hero Ulysses S. Grant succeeded Andrew Johnson as president in 1869 and quickly became an issue himself, proving that brilliance on the battlefield does not necessarily translate into competence in the White House.

Each year, events in the South received less of the North's attention. Reconstruction slipped further into the background, and Northerners signaled growing unwillingness to intervene in Southern affairs. While Northern resolve to defend black freedom withered, Southern commitment to white supremacy intensified. Throughout the South, Democrats redoubled their attack on Republican rule. Without Northern protection, Southern Republicans were no match for the Democrats' economic coercion, political corruption, and violence. One by one, Republican state governments fell. The election of 1876 both confirmed and completed the collapse of reconstruction.