

# Congressional Reconstruction

## Chapter 3 – Section 2



# Black Codes

- Laws that restricted freedmen's rights
- Created virtual slavery



# Examples

- *Curfews* (couldn't gather after sunset)
- *Vagrancy laws* (not working resulted in fines, whippings, or sold for a year's labor – a catch 22 because couldn't get work!)
- *Labor contracts* (had to sign year long contract if broken lost all wages you'd earned)
- *Limits on womens' rights* (mothers who wanted to stay home to raise children were forced to do farm labor)
- *Land restrictions* (could only rent land or homes in rural areas – forced them to live on plantations)

No negro or freedman shall be permitted [allowed] to rent or keep a house within the limits of the town under any circumstances. . . .

– from a Black Code in Opelousas, Louisiana

# Response of Congress

- Northern Republicans in Congress responded to this defiance by blaming President Johnson (a southerner) and used their power to *amend the constitution*



# 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment

- Said anyone born here or naturalized are citizens and all citizens must be *treated equally* by the law



# Civil Rights

- Personal freedoms guaranteed by the law
- They weren't granted to African Americans
- Even in the North racial inequality was still common



# Riots

- White rioters across the South attacked blacks, shooting, hanging, and killing hundreds
- Even white police joined in



# Reconstruction Act of 1867

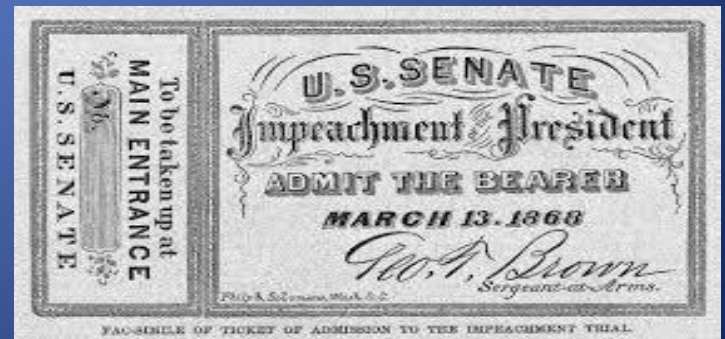
- Put the South under military rule
- Said all blacks could vote
- States were required to ratify the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment





# Impeachment

- To be charged with wrongdoing in office
- Can be impeached if you do something *unconstitutional*
- (Radical republicans were looking to get rid of Johnson so when he illegally fired his Secretary of War without the Senate's approval they impeached him)
- Avoided conviction by 1 vote and was not removed from office



# Ulysses S. Grant

- Elected after Johnson
- Victorious Civil War general was an ally, not foe, of Congress like Johnson was



# 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment

- Last major piece of Reconstruction legislation
- Said no citizen can be denied the right to vote because of race or having previously been a slave



# Vote for African Americans

- As a result 600 African Americans were elected across the South (including a black governor in LA and a freed slave to the Senate – Blanche Bruce)



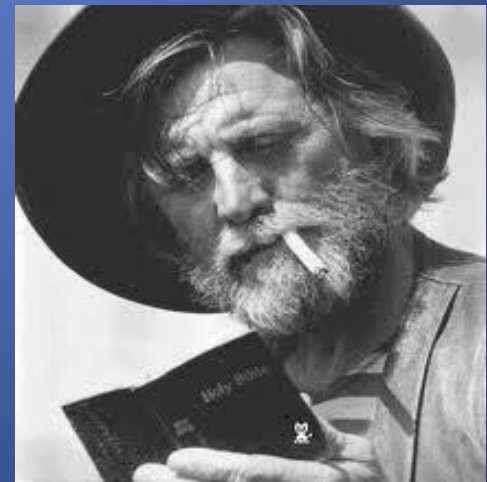
# Carpetbaggers

- Northerners who moved South to make a profit
- Would quickly stuff their clothes in a suitcase (made out of cheap carpet scraps) and head south
- Viewed as greedy and rushing to profit from southern misery



# Scalawags

- Hated as much as carpetbaggers
- White southerners who had opposed secession and supported Reconstruction and the Republican party
- Seen as traitors for “betraying” southern values
- Many were poor



# *Writing Assignment*

- Imagine you are a freed slave living under the black codes of the South. Write a letter (approx. 200 words) to your friend or family member living in the North explaining the effects this has had on your life.