The Rage for Order: Reconstruction and Jim Crow in America

Jim Crow comes to Town
Our Session Subjects:
1. America in 1860
2. Presidential Reconstruction
3. Congressional Reconstruction
4. Reconstructing Reconstruction
5. The Romance of Reunion
6. The End of Reconstruction
7. The Lost Cause Movement
8. Jim Crow comes to town
- The Civil War destroyed the old order of southern slavery but not northern or southern attitudes toward African Americans

- Southern defeat and the conduct of Blacks after the War bred resentment among Southern whites

- Fear of Blacks bred the Jim Crow laws and customs

- White sense of superiority bred the right to control

- Immediately after the War, the North attempted to protect freed Blacks with underfunded institutions

- On withdrawal of Northern troops, the South sought once again to control Blacks and “redeem” the Southern State governments
The End of Reconstruction in 1877

- Jim Crow period inaugurated by:
  - “Redemption” of all ex Confederate states
  - the withdrawal of federal troops from control of south
  - Northern public abandonment of Blacks as “wards” of the nation
  - Acquiescence of the North and West to the South’s demand that the race problem be left to the disposition of Southern white people
Segregation not practical in agricultural South before Civil War

- Under slavery, segregation would have been an inconvenience and an obstruction to the functioning of the agrarian intensive slave system.

- When Black’s status was fixed by enslavement, little occasion or need for segregation.
Free Blacks North of Slavery: Blueprint for Jim Crow

The Northern Black was constantly aware of white supremacy

- The major political parties vied with each other in their devotion to this doctrine; few politicians questioned

- Public firmly believed Blacks were incapable of being assimilated politically, socially, or physically into white society (Lincoln’s view)
- Majority of pre War northern whites made sure that the Black understood his ‘place’ and that he was severely confined to it.

  ○ One of these ways was social and economic “segregation” with legal and extra-legal codes

    ○ permeated all aspects of Black life in the free states by 1860.
- Before war, northern Blacks were either excluded from railway cars, omnibuses, stagecoaches, and steamboats or assigned to special “Jim Crow” sections

- Blacks sat, when permitted, in secluded and remote corners of theaters and lecture halls

- Could not enter most hotels, restaurants, and resorts, except as servants
- Prayed in “Black pews” in the white churches, and if partaking of the sacrament, they waited until the whites had been served.

- Often educated, if at all, in segregated schools, punished in segregated prisons, nursed in segregated hospitals, and buried in segregated cemeteries.
- Generally speaking, the farther west the Black went in the free states, the harsher he found proscription and segregation.

- Indiana, Illinois, Ohio and Oregon incorporated in their constitutions provisions restricting the admission of Blacks to their borders.

As a result, post Civil War North was not in the best rhetorical position to instruct the South nor to care about freedmen for long.
The South in Defeat

Defeat, emancipation, occupation, and Reconstruction had profound and complex effects on Southern racial relations.

- Immediate response was simultaneous withdrawal of both races from the enforced intimacy and the burdensome obligations imposed by the pre-war South.
  - Ex: withdrawal of the Freedmen from the white-dominated Protestant churches.
- Denied the benefits of slavery, whites shook off its responsibilities
  - excess workers let go, no care for dependents too old, too ill or too young to work
  - tenants too poor to pay rent evicted
Withdrawal of Federal “interference” of South after 1877

What institutions, laws or customs would be necessary to maintain white control (order) now that slavery was gone?

- Under slavery, control was maintained by a large degree of physical contact and association

- Under the “new order” the old methods were not always available or applicable

- To the dominant whites, the ‘new order’ required of compulsory separation of the races
1st attempt at Southern control was 1865 Black Codes – labor oriented

Other aspects of segregation appeared early and were sanctioned by Federal Reconstruction authorities:
- segregation of public schools
- labor contracts
- separate public facilities (rail cars, hotels, etc.)
Southern Redeemers who overthrew Reconstruction in 1877 and established ‘Home Rule’ in the Southern states conducted their campaign in the name of white supremacy.

- Did not, however, immediately inaugurate any revolution in the customs and laws governing racial relations.

- Retained segregation practices developed during Reconstruction, but showed no disposition to expand.
Race relations after 1877 “Redemption” were “unstable interlude” before arrival of the Jim Crow laws in 1880s

- More than a decade was to pass before the first Jim Crow law was to appear upon the law books of a Southern state

- More than two decades before the older states of the southern seaboard were to adopt Jim Crow laws
1880s - The Rage for Order: Jim Crow appears

*Jim Crow laws and practices*

Laws and practices against

- economic opportunity/jobs
  - Labor jobs for men and domestic servants for women
  - Lower pay than for whites in same job
- jury service
- Blacks winning lawsuits against whites
- Housing
- Public accommodations – hotels, street cars and rail cars
- Suffrage – voting tests and violence
Capitulation to Racism

South’s adoption of extreme racism was due not so much to a conversion of whites as it was to a relaxation of Northern and internal Southern opposition.

- All the emotions of fear, jealousy, proscription, hatred, and fanaticism had long been present.

- What enabled these elements to dominate was general weakening and discrediting of the numerous forces that had kept them in check.
- Restraining forces included:
  
  - Northern liberal opinion in the press
  - Northern public opinion pressing Congress (from punishment and vengeance)
  - the Freedmen’s Bureau
  - the federal courts
  - Republican controlled federal and state governments
  - internal checks imposed by the prestige and influence of the Southern conservatives
  - idealism and zeal of the Southern ‘progressive’ radicals.
The acquiescence of Northern liberalism in the Compromise of 1877 defined the beginning of the liberal retreat on the race issue.
- The Compromise left the freedmen to the ‘custody’ of the conservative Southerners
- Perceived corruption of federal and state governments made Northern public question the value of federal government involvement in the South
- Northern opinion shifted to the right, keeping pace with the South, conceding point after point
  - at no time were the sections very far apart on race policy
Supreme Court cases weaken the Laws

- In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, decided in 1896, the Court subscribed to the doctrine that ‘legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts’ and laid down the ‘separate but equal’ rule for the justification of segregation.

- Two years later, in *Williams v. Mississippi* the Court completed the opening of the legal road to proscription, segregation, and disfranchisement by approving the Mississippi plan for depriving Blacks of the franchise.
US Imperialistic foreign policy

In 1898, the United States plunged into imperialistic adventures overseas under the leadership of the Republican party.

- Aggression in the Pacific and the Caribbean brought under the jurisdiction of the United States eight million people of the “colored” races,
  - ‘a varied assortment of inferior races,’ as the Nation magazine described them, ‘which, of course, could not be allowed to vote.’

- As America shouldered the “White Man’s Burden,” took up at the same time many Southern attitudes on the subject of race
- Southern leaders exploited implication of the new imperialism for their domestic policies.
Summary of Reconstruction

Civil War fought for Union preservation, not abolishment of slavery

Reconstruction attempted to change southern society via law – legislation and Constitutional amendments

Southern attitudes to Blacks did not change in defeat

Northern attitudes to Blacks did not change in victory
Reconstruction failed due to:

- Northern anger subsided
- Radical Republicans lost power in federal and state level
- Northern practice inconsistent to maintain momentum
- Too radical for ‘federalism’
- Country’s attention on economic growth
- Tainted with general corruption
- Underfunded
- Friction of northern business
Jim Crow laws were attempts to control the Black race among white society from fear of Black uncontrol

Jim Crow institutionalized White supremacy

Result: The end of Reconstruction and beginning of institutionalized racism
THE END OF "THE RAGE FOR ORDER: RECONSTRUCTION AND JIM CROW IN AMERICA"