



# Background: Images from Reconstruction

## IMAGE



## BACKGROUND

The captions read, “The New Orleans Riot—Murdering Negroes in the rear of Mechanics’ Institute” and “Platform in Mechanics’ Institute after the riot.” On July 30, 1866, white, conservative Democrats attacked progressive Republicans (mostly Black) over political disagreements. The Republicans called a convention to rewrite the state’s constitution due to anger over the Black codes, discriminatory laws that prevented Black people from voting. The Democrats—including police and firemen—opposed increased political power for Black people. At least 34 Black people were killed and 119 wounded. Riots like this one were widespread, leading Republican leaders in the U.S. Congress to implement new protections for Black Americans.

## SOURCE

Theodore R. Davis, *The Riot in New Orleans*, 1866, wood engraving, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/cph.3c38353>.

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At a polling place in Washington, D.C., a Black Union Army veteran places his ballot in the box for “Republican Mayor Welch,” which is next to the empty ballot box for “The White Man’s Ticket for Mayor H. Addison.” President Andrew Johnson (a conservative Democrat) is standing on the left, holding his “Suffrage Veto” (a reference to his opposition to voting rights for Black people) and additional “Vetoes” are stuffed in his coat pocket. A man labeled “Ex. C.S.A.” (Confederate States of America) stands next to him. The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, giving Black men the right to vote, was not ratified until 1870.

## SOURCE

Thomas Nast, *The Georgetown Elections—The Negro at the Ballot-Box*, March 16, 1867, wood engraving, Harper’s Weekly, <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2010652200>.

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## BACKGROUND

A Black woman is cooking, with a man and three children around her. A member of the Ku Klux Klan aims a rifle at them through the doorway. This illustration was meant to bring about sympathy from white Northern readers for Black victims of the Klan.

## SOURCE

Frank Bellew, *Visit of the Ku-Klux, February 24, 1872*, still image, Harper’s Weekly, <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47dc-8f15-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.



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A Black man lies murdered, with markings near his body that say, "Negro Killed," "Greeley Ratification," and "KKK." Horace Greeley was a Presidential candidate in 1872, who belonged to the more liberal Republican Party, but favored ending Reconstruction. The Klan and other groups used violence to intimidate Black people and keep them from voting.

## SOURCE

Thomas Nast, *One Vote Less*, 1872, still image, Richmond Whig, <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/voting-rights-act-of-1965/sources/1385>.

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White groups used terror, violence, and intimidation to restore "white man's government" and to remedy the "lost cause" of the Civil War. In this image, members of the Ku Klux Klan and White League are shaking hands over a skull and crossbones. Below, a Black woman and man kneel over their dead child. In the background, a school burns and a Black person is lynched.

## SOURCE

Thomas Nast, *Worse than Slavery*, October 24, 1874, newspaper illustration, Harper's Weekly, [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Worse\\_than\\_Slavery\\_\(1874\),\\_by\\_Thomas\\_Nast.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Worse_than_Slavery_(1874),_by_Thomas_Nast.jpg).

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South Carolina representative Robert B. Elliott was one of the first Black Members of Congress. Here, he delivers a famous speech in favor of the Civil Rights Act on January 6, 1874. The act, which guaranteed equal treatment in all places of public accommodation regardless of race, was passed on March 1, 1875. The image shows Elliott speaking from the floor of the House of Representatives. Above him hangs a banner with a quotation from his speech: "What you give to one class you must give to all. What you deny to one class. You deny to all."

## SOURCE

E. Sachse & Co., *The Shackle Broken—by the Genius of Freedom*, 1874, lithograph and print, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003690777>.