

RESISTING OPPRESSION, CLAIMING FREEDOM



ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

How did those opposed to equal rights for Black people try to prevent the progress that was being made during Reconstruction? How did Black people show resistance?



OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Discuss what is required to live a free and happy life.
- Describe how laws passed following the Civil War, such as Black codes and Jim Crow laws, limited freedom and equality for Black Americans.
- Analyze images depicting Black resistance to oppression and inequality during the era of Reconstruction.



LEARNING STANDARDS

See the [standards alignment chart](#) to learn how this lesson supports New Jersey State Standards.



TIME NEEDED

60 minutes



MATERIALS

- AV equipment to project an image
- Index cards or sticky notes
- *Examples of Laws Limiting Freedom* (one per student)
- *Analyzing Images of Resistance* (one or more copies per student)
- *Images of Resistance* (one or more copies per small group)



VOCABULARY

Black codes

Civil War

emigrant

Exoduster

Freedmen's Bureau

Jim Crow

Jim Crow laws

segregate/segregation

Reconstruction

Procedures

3

PART 1

A Free and Happy Life (30 minutes)

1 Ask students to consider the following question: “What do you most need to lead a free and happy life?” Post the list below on the board. In pairs, have students copy each item onto a separate index card or sticky note. Direct pairs to rank the list according to the needs they feel are most important for freedom and happiness. Encourage them to discuss and share their reasoning as they sort.

- communication
- education
- family
- freedom to express opinions
- health and hygiene
- housing
- leisure
- nutrition
- safety
- transportation

2 Debrief the exercise by discussing the following questions as a class:

- Which items did you rank as the top two or three? Why were these most important to you?
- How would your life be different if one of these things were taken from you?
- Are you aware of any groups of people—in history or today—who were/have been deprived of one of these things? How do you think this affects/has affected their lives?

NOTE

The name “Jim Crow” refers to a fictional minstrel character created in the 1830s, depicting a clumsy and dim-witted enslaved man. The widely performed act was popular among white audiences and “Jim Crow” became a common pejorative term for Black people.

NOTE

Circulate and help students with any old-fashioned or legalistic language that they might not understand. Explain that “negro” and “colored” were terms commonly used to describe Black people in other times, and that they are inappropriate to use today.

3

Transition to your study of slavery and Reconstruction. Remind students that following the Civil War, there was a period of time in which Black Americans enjoyed new rights and progress. Explain that some white people felt threatened by these new rights and created unfair laws—known as Black codes and later as Jim Crow laws—that diminished the freedoms of Black people. Use the definitions below as needed to elaborate with students.

Black Codes: These were laws that restricted the freedom and movement of Black people and forced them to work for low wages. Though they existed before the Civil War throughout the U.S., most of these laws were passed in the South from 1865–1866.

Jim Crow laws: These were laws that segregated (separated) Black people from white people and limited their opportunity to vote, hold jobs, get an education and enjoy other freedoms. These laws started in 1876 and lasted until 1965. They existed throughout the U.S., but were more widespread and long-lasting in the South.

4

Form small groups of four by having the pairs formed in step 1 join with another pair. Distribute copies of the handout *Examples of Laws Limiting Freedom*. Direct groups to read just the examples that reflect the number one item(s) from their ranked lists in step 1. Collaboratively, have them create an illustration or write a paragraph showing how the lives of Black people became less free and equal as a result of the laws.

5

Allow groups to share their work with the class as time permits. Discuss the following questions:

- How did it feel to read about these prejudiced and unfair laws?
- How do you think the laws you read about affected the ability of Black Americans to lead a free and happy life?
- How do you think Black people might have resisted or fought back against laws like these?

PART 2**Images of Resistance (30 minutes)**

- 6** Tell students that they will investigate images depicting some of the ways that Black people resisted unfair laws and treatment in the years following the Civil War. Project the handout *Analyzing Images of Resistance*. Introduce students to the TACOS method (see handout) and demonstrate it by engaging the class in an analysis of any sample image.
- 7** Divide the class into small groups and distribute copies of the handout *Analyzing Images of Resistance*. Have small groups analyze at least one of the drawings from *Images of Resistance*. You can assign one or more to each group or provide groups with the whole gallery and allow them to select according to their interest. Circulate as students work and encourage them to discuss their different perspectives and ideas as they observe.
- 8** Bring the whole group back together. As time allows, project the *Images of Resistance* and allow groups to share the titles they assigned to each image along with their rationales. Emphasize the idea that although some Americans were unwilling to accept change, many Black people and others worked hard to resist hate and make our country freer and fairer for all people.
- 9** Conclude the lesson by engaging students in a final discussion using some of the questions on the next page.



Discussion Questions

1

Why did some Americans want to limit freedom and opportunities for Black Americans after the Civil War?

2

How did Black codes, Jim Crow laws and other unfair practices affect Black Americans?

3

How did Black people resist being treated unfairly during this time period?

4

What peaceful methods did you see in use to resist unfair treatment?

5

Which of the images that you observed do you think you'll most remember? Why?

6

What are some of the ways we can resist things that are wrong today?

Lesson Extensions

- Have students read *The Slave Who Went to Congress* (see Additional Resources), which profiles one of the first Black congressmen. Then have them research one or more of the Black congressmen from the Reconstruction era listed below, who also started their lives as enslaved people. Assign students to create a collage showing some of the ways that these men emerged from slavery to resist unfair laws and treatment during the period following the Civil War.
 - ➔ Blanche Kelso Bruce
 - ➔ Jefferson Franklin Long
 - ➔ Robert Smalls
 - ➔ Jeremiah Haralson
 - ➔ John Roy Lynch
 - ➔ Benjamin Sterling Turner
 - ➔ John Adams Hyman
 - ➔ Joseph Hayne Rainey
 - ➔ Josiah Thomas Walls

- One of the most important ways that Black people resisted oppression and created opportunity after the Civil War was through the establishment of schools for Black students. Between 1861 and 1900, more than 90 historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were created. Shaw University, founded in North Carolina in 1865, was the first Black college set up after the Civil War. Other early HBCUs include Talladega College, Howard University, Morehouse College and Hampton University. Assign students to select one of these schools to research and have them give a short presentation on the school's history. Students may also research famous alumni from the school (past and present) and report on the accomplishments of these individuals.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- + Constitutional Rights Foundation, "Southern Black Codes," <https://www.crf-usa.org/brown-v-board-50th-anniversary/southern-black-codes.html>.
- + Digital Public Library of America, "Primary Source Sets—Exodusters: African American Migration to the Great Plains," <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/exodusters-african-american-migration-to-the-great-plains>.
- + Digital Public Library of America, "Primary Source Sets—The Freedmen's Bureau," <https://dp.la/primary-source-sets/the-freedmen-s-bureau>.
- + Gaillard, Frye and Rosner, Marti. *The Slave Who Went to Congress*. Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2020.
- + PBS Learning Media. "Reconstruction: The Black Codes." <https://ny.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/reconstruction-black-codes/reconstruction-the-black-codes>.



Examples of Laws Limiting Freedom

Focus only on the laws below that match the number one categories you chose in response to the question, "What do you most need to lead a free and happy life?"

-
- Communication** The Corporation Commission is hereby vested with power and authority to require telephone companies...to maintain separate booths for white and colored patrons when there is a demand for such separate booths. (Oklahoma)
-
- Education** The schools for white children and the schools for negro children shall be conducted separately. (Florida)
-
- Education** Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them. (North Carolina)
-
- Family** It shall be unlawful for a white person to marry anyone except a white person. Any marriage in violation of this section shall be void. (Georgia)
-
- Nutrition** It shall be unlawful to conduct a restaurant or other place for the serving of food in the city, at which white and colored people are served in the same room, unless such white and colored persons are effectually separated by a solid partition extending from the floor upward to a distance of seven feet or higher, and unless a separate entrance from the street is provided for each compartment. (Alabama)
-
- Health** There shall be maintained by the governing authorities of every hospital...separate entrances for white and colored patients and visitors, and such entrances shall be used by the race only for which they are prepared. (Mississippi)
-
- Health** No person or corporation shall require any white female nurse to nurse in wards or rooms in hospitals, either public or private, in which negro men are placed. (Alabama)
-
- Housing** Any person...who shall rent any part of any such building to a negro person or a negro family when such building is already in whole or in part in occupancy by a white person or white family...shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty-five (\$25.00) nor more than one hundred (\$100.00) dollars or be imprisoned not less than 10, or more than 60 days, or both... (Louisiana)
-



Examples of Laws Limiting Freedom (continued)

Hygiene No colored barber shall serve as a barber [to] white women or girls. (Georgia)

Leisure It shall be unlawful for any amateur colored baseball team to play baseball in any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of any playground devoted to the white race. (Georgia)

Leisure It shall be unlawful for colored people to frequent any park owned or maintained by the city for the benefit, use and enjoyment of white persons... (Georgia)

Leisure Every person...operating...any public hall, theatre, opera house, motion picture show or any place of public entertainment...which is attended by both white and colored persons, shall separate the white race and the colored race and shall set apart and designate... certain seats...to be occupied by white persons and a portion...to be occupied by colored persons. (Virginia)

Safety No organization of colored troops shall be permitted where white troops are available, and...colored troops shall be under the command of white officers. (North Carolina)

Transportation The conductors or managers on all...railroads shall have power, and are hereby required, to assign to each white or colored passenger his or her respective car, coach or compartment. If the passenger fails to disclose his race, the conductor and managers...shall be the sole judges of his race. (Virginia)

Freedom to express opinions Any person...who shall be guilty of printing, publishing or circulating printed... matter...or general information, arguments or suggestions in favor of social equality or of intermarriage between whites and negroes, shall be...subject to fine...not exceeding five hundred (500.00) dollars or imprisonment not exceeding six (6) months or both. (Mississippi)

SOURCE: Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, "Examples of Jim Crow Laws," <https://www.ferris.edu/htmls/news/jimcrow/links/misclink/examples.htm>.



Analyzing Images of Resistance

Examine the image closely using the TACOS strategy. Record your observations on the chart. Then give the image a title relating to the theme of resistance during the Reconstruction period.

IMAGE NUMBER: _____ **YOUR TITLE:** _____

TIME

(When was this image created? If a date is not provided, are there clues about the time?)

ACTIONS

(Who are the people in the image? What are they doing or saying? What is going on?)

CAPTION

(What text accompanies the image? What does it mean? Does the text match the actions you see?)

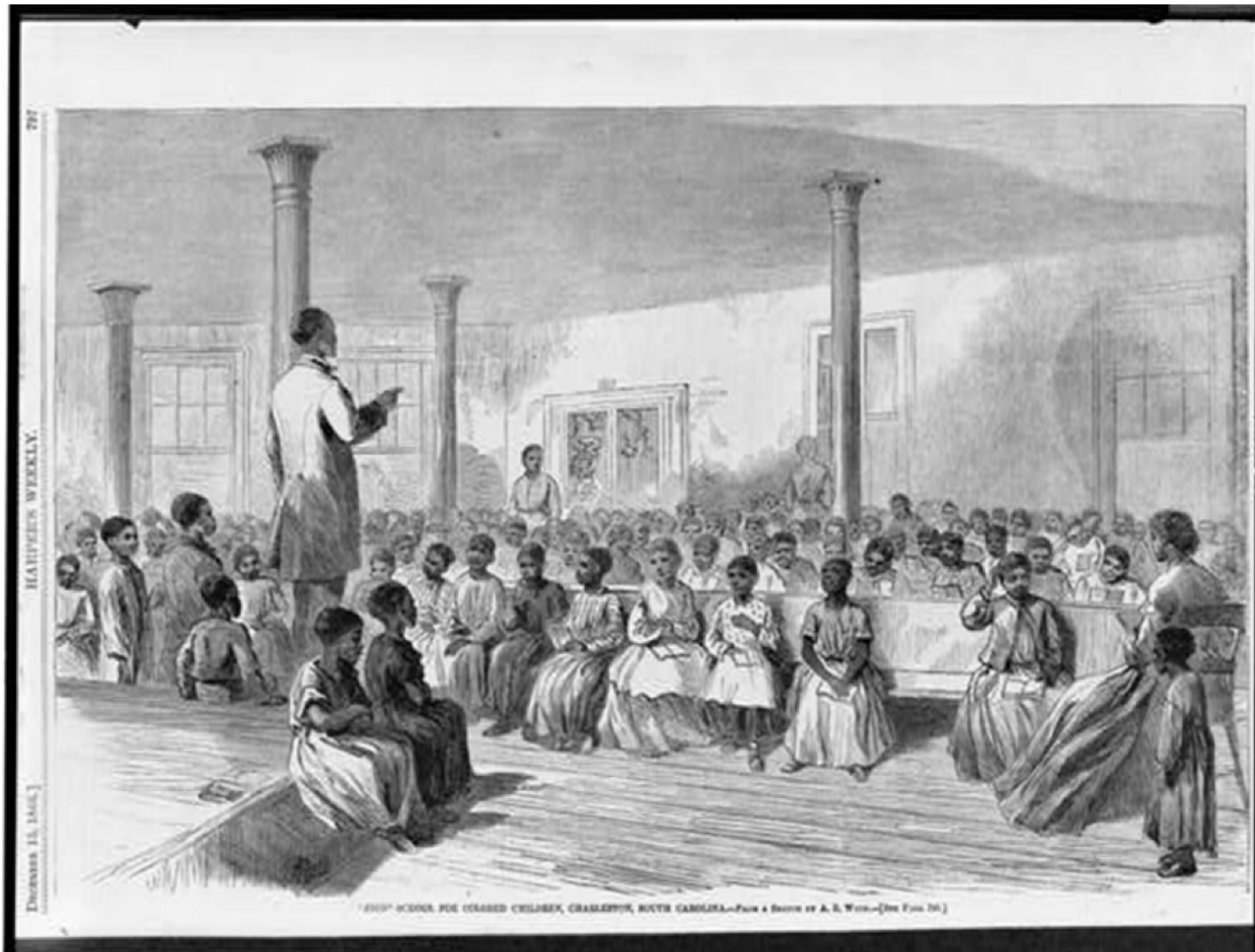
OBJECTS

(What objects stand out the most or are most important? How do they support the artist's message?)

SUMMARY

(What is the meaning or message of the image? What is the mood or feeling?)

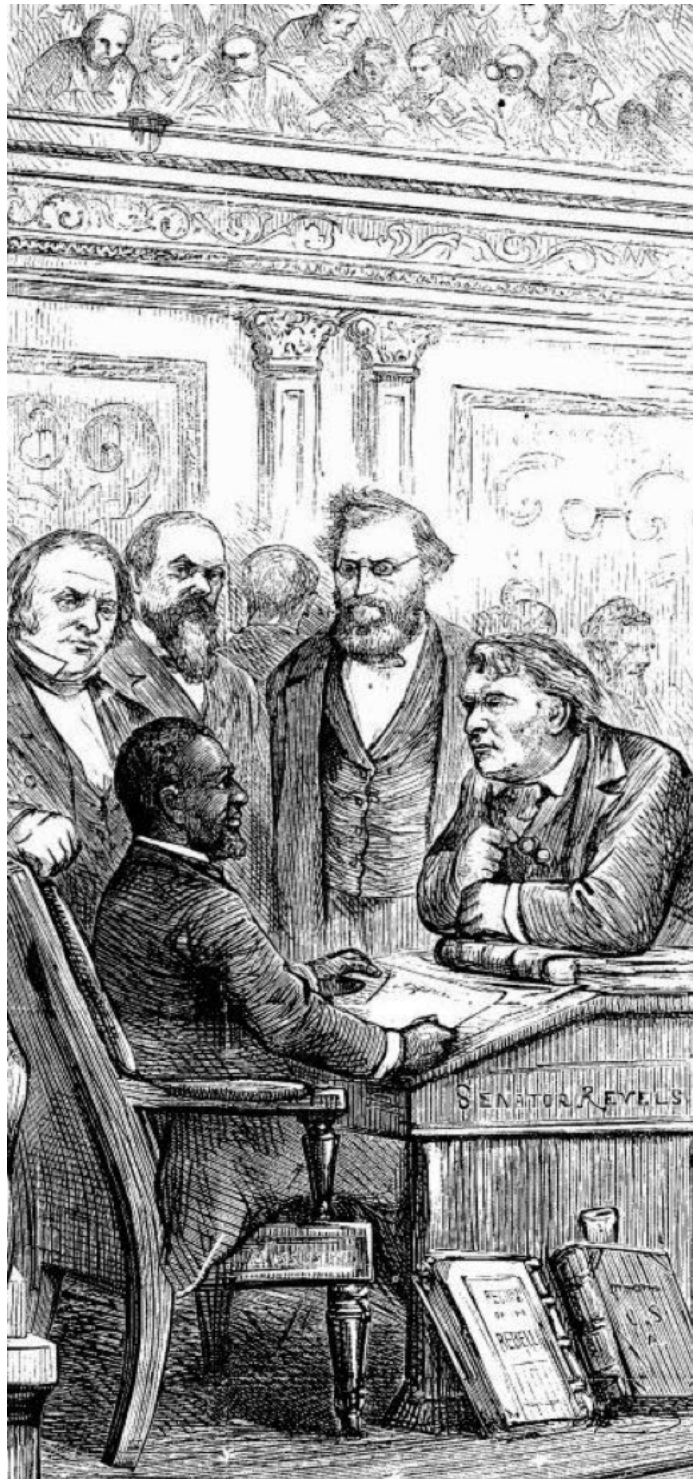
Images of Resistance #1



School for colored children, Charleston, South Carolina



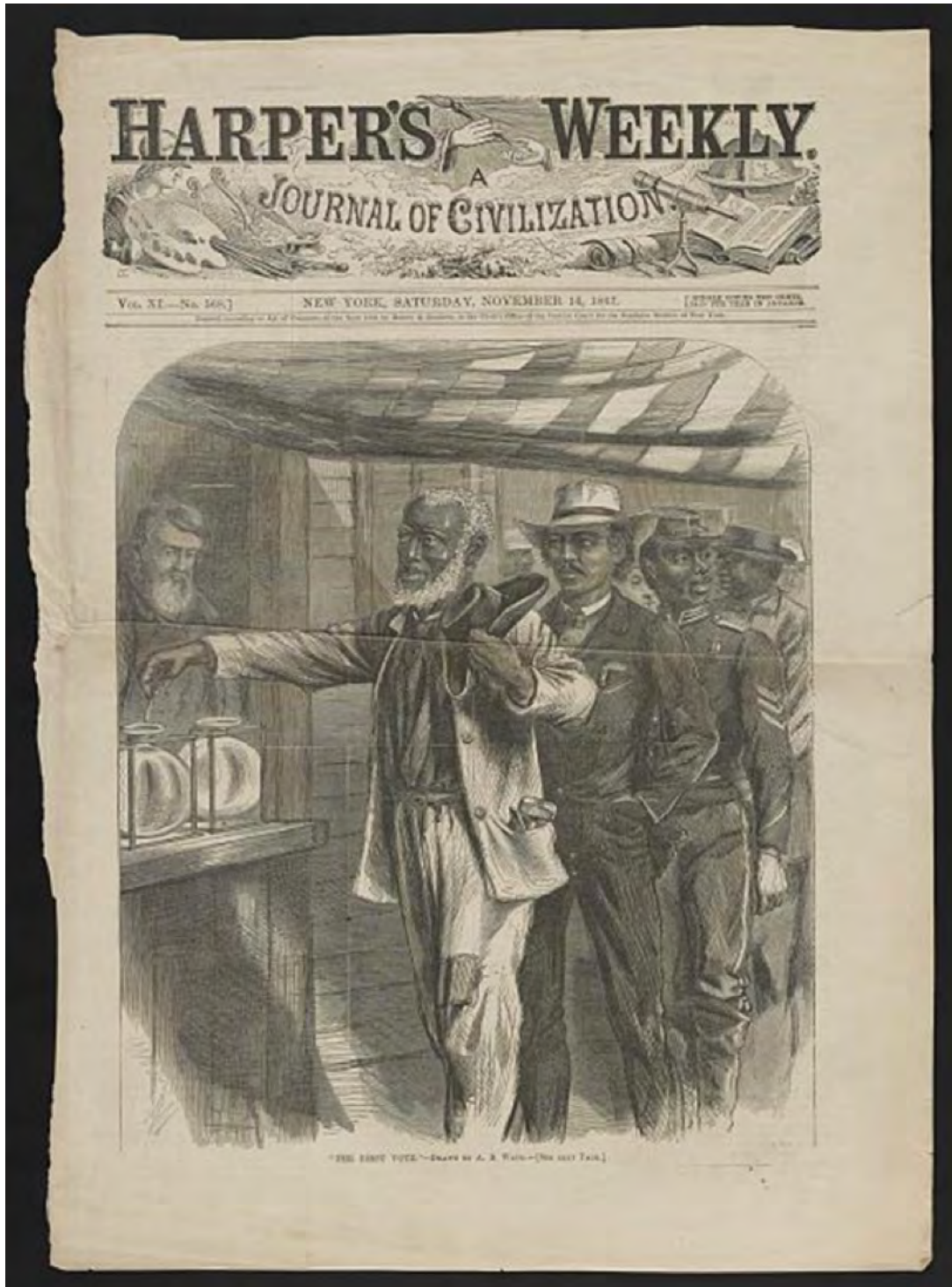
Images of Resistance #2



Hiram Revels takes a seat for Mississippi in the U.S. Senate amidst a group of other senators



Images of Resistance #3



The First Vote

Images of Resistance #4



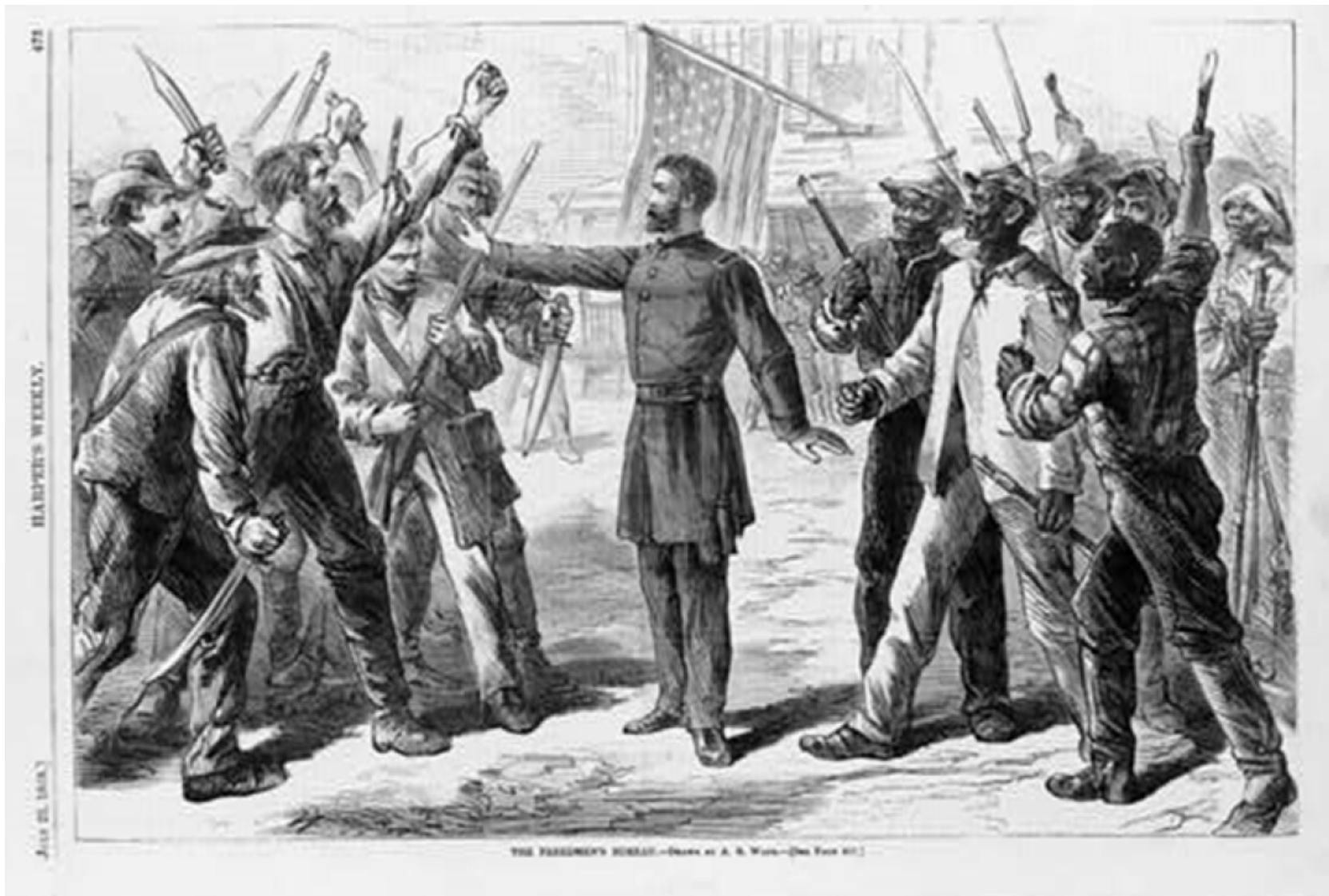
Exoduster Movement: Procession of refugees from the steamboat landing to the colored churches

Images of Resistance #5



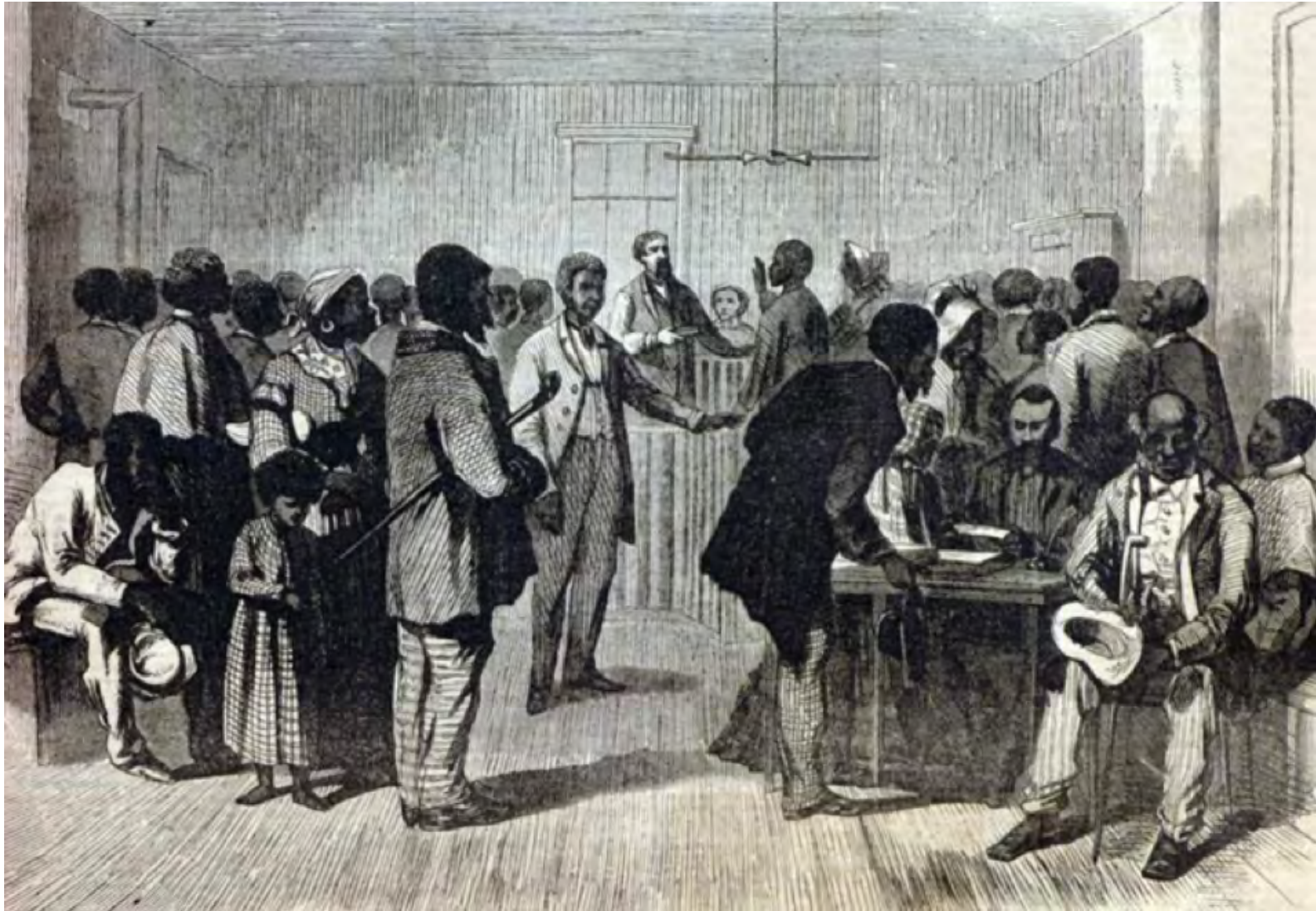
Colored emigrants seeking homes in the North

Images of Resistance #6



The Freedmen's Bureau

Images of Resistance #7



Court in session

Images of Resistance #8



Marriage of a colored soldier at Vicksburg by Chaplain Warren of the Freedmens' Bureau



Images of Resistance: Sources and Citations

IMAGE #1: Zion African-American School, Charleston, South Carolina, winter 1866

Waud, A.R. "Zion" school for colored children, Charleston, South Carolina. 1866. Wood engraving. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., <https://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/45862>.

IMAGE #2: Hiram Revels, 1870

Hiram Revels (one of the first Black members of Congress) takes a seat for Mississippi in the U.S. Senate amidst a contemplative group of other senators (from left to right: Henry Wilson, Oliver Morton, Carl Schurz and Charles Sumner). https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Revels,_Schurz_and_Sumner.jpg.

IMAGE #3: The First Vote, 1867

A queue of African American men: the first, dressed as a laborer, casting his vote; the second is dressed as a businessman; the third is wearing a Union army uniform; and the fourth appears to be dressed as a farmer.

Waud, A.R. *The First Vote*. 1867. Print: wood engraving. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2011648984>.

IMAGE #4: Exoduster Movement, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, April 19, 1879

Procession of refugees from the steamboat landing to the colored churches. Exodusters was a name given to Black people who migrated from states along the Mississippi River to Kansas in the late 19th century, as part of the Exoduster Movement. It was the first general migration of Black people following the Civil War. As many as 40,000 Exodusters left the South to settle in Kansas, Oklahoma and Colorado.

Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper. *Exoduster Movement*. 1879. Science Source,

<https://pixels.com/featured/2-exoduster-movement-1879-science-source.html>

IMAGE #5: Colored emigrants seeking homes in the North, Harper's Weekly Magazine, August 3, 1867

"African-American internal migration from Virginia to New York City by ship, July 1867, artist's impression, zoomable image.," House Divided: The Civil War Research Engine at Dickinson College, <http://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/47538>.

IMAGE #6: The Freedmen's Bureau, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, July 25, 1868

Man representing the Freedmen's Bureau stands between armed groups of Euro-Americans and Afro-Americans.

Waud, A.R. *The Freedmen's Bureau*. 1868. Print: wood engraving. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/92514996>.

IMAGE #7: Court in session, Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, August 25, 1866

Freedmen's Bureau offices, Richmond, Virginia, summer 1866

"Court in session, Freedmen's Bureau offices, Richmond, Virginia, summer 1866, artist's impression.," House Divided: The Civil War Research Engine at Dickinson College, <https://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/45576>.

IMAGE #8: Freedmen's Bureau Wedding, Vicksburg, Mississippi, Harper's Weekly Magazine, June 30, 1866

Marriage of a colored soldier at Vicksburg by Chaplain Warren of the Freedmen's Bureau.

"Freedmens' Bureau Wedding, Vicksburg, Mississippi, June 1866, artist's impression.," House Divided: The Civil War Research Engine at Dickinson College, <http://hd.housedivided.dickinson.edu/node/45472>.