

THE WallBuilder Report

FEBRUARY 2002

2002 BLACK HISTORY ISSUE

Below: President Lincoln reading the Emancipation Proclamation



Black History Month

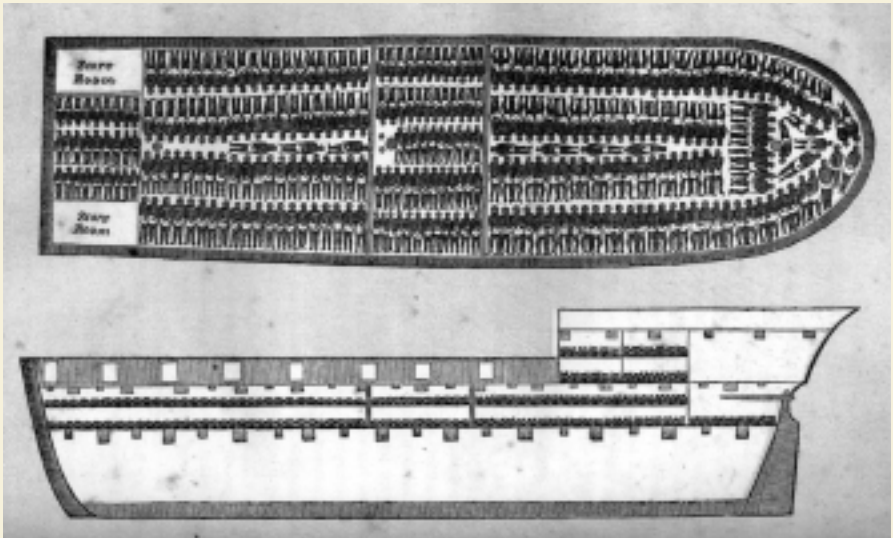
February is Black History Month, and this year we will focus on the first significant civil rights gains of blacks in America. The history of how these civil rights became reality will shock many.

The Earliest Civil Rights Efforts

Of course, from the time that the Dutch sailed the first shipload of slaves up the James River in Virginia in 1619, the history of the first African-Americans was characterized by a denial of civil rights. Regrettably, slavery soon spread from Virginia to all the other colonies, despite the valiant efforts of many. (For example, the Pilgrims and the Puritans led opposition to slavery in Massachusetts; when the

first slave trader brought his ship to Massachusetts, he was arrested and his slaves were returned to Africa; and when Georgia was founded in 1732, its founder, James Oglethorpe, also prohibited slavery.)

Significantly, the first opponents of slavery and the chief advocates for racial equal rights were the churches (the Quakers, Presbyterians, Methodists, etc.). Furthermore, religious leaders such as Quaker Anthony Benezet were the leading spokesmen against slavery, and evangelical leaders such as Presbyterian signer of the Declaration Benjamin Rush were the founders of the nation's first abolition societies.



An example of slave shipping methods, begun after the Dutch sailed the first shipload of slaves up the James River in Virginia in 1619.



Benjamin Rush

So great was the effect of these early civil rights pioneers that prior to 1774, two of the thirteen colonies actively sought to abolish slavery or the slave trade, and other colonies were rapidly moving in that direction. As Benjamin Franklin explained:

A [desire] to abolish slavery prevails in North America, many of the Pennsylvanians have set their slaves at liberty, [Virginia legislators]

have petitioned the King for permission to make a law for preventing the importation of more [slaves] into that colony. This request, however, will probably not be granted, as their former laws of that kind have always been repealed.

Indeed, King George III vetoed all colonial laws abolishing slavery or ending the slave trade. His actions actually caused many American political leaders to become involved in the move to separate from Great Britain. These leaders were quite open in their denunciation of slavery:

Slavery is repugnant to the principles of Christianity. . . . It is rebellion against the authority of a common Father. It is a practical denial of the [effect] of the death of a common Savior. It is [encroaching on the authority] of the great Sovereign of the universe who has solemnly claimed an exclusive property in the souls of men. *Benjamin Rush, Signer of the Declaration, Director of the US Mint*

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Christianity, by introducing into Europe the truest principles of humanity, universal benevolence, and brotherly love, has happily abolished civil slavery. Let us who profess the same religion practice its pre-

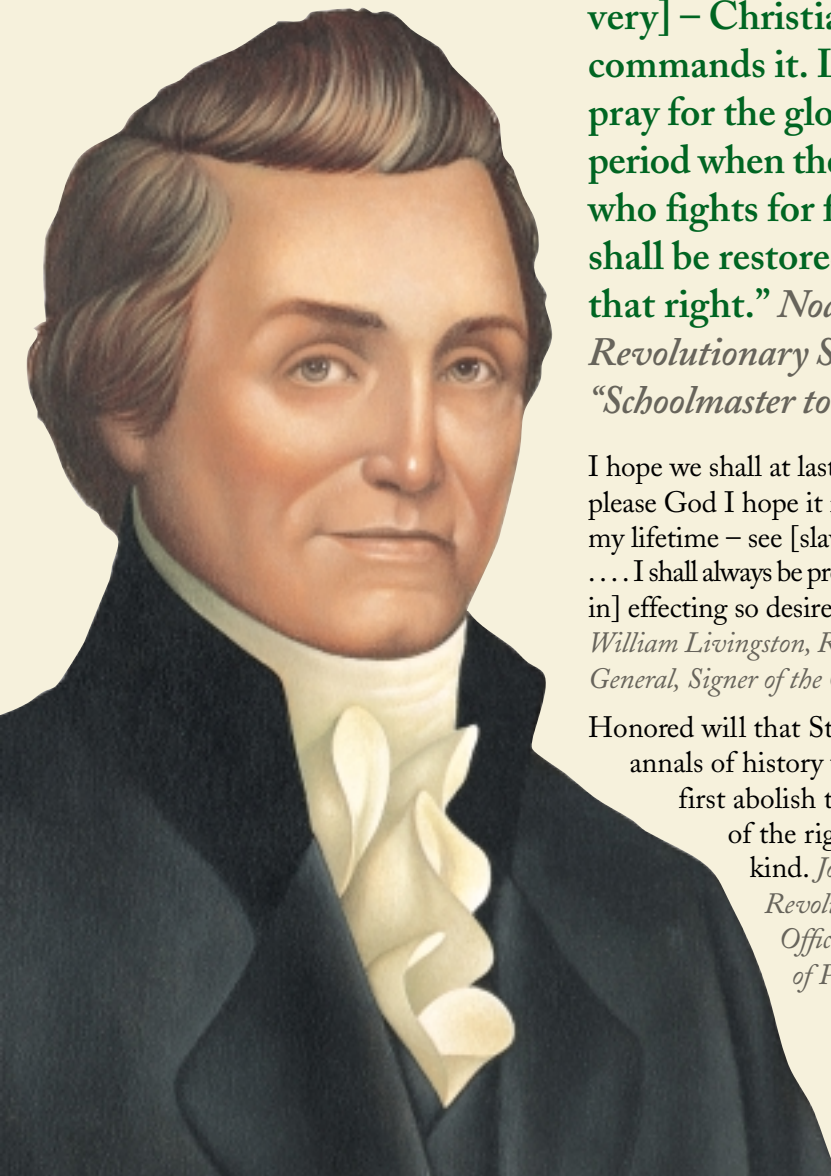
cepts by agreeing to [abolish slavery in America]. *Richard Henry Lee, Signer of the Declaration, Framers of the Bill of Rights*

“Justice and humanity require [the end of slavery] – Christianity commands it. Let [us] pray for the glorious period when the last slave who fights for freedom shall be restored to. . . . that right.” *Noah Webster, Revolutionary Soldier, “Schoolmaster to America”*

I hope we shall at last – and if it so please God I hope it may be during my lifetime – see [slavery removed] . . . I shall always be prompt [to assist in] effecting so desirable an event. *William Livingston, Revolutionary General, Signer of the Constitution*

Honored will that State be in the annals of history which shall first abolish this violation of the rights of mankind. *Joseph Reed, Revolutionary Officer, Governor of Pennsylvania*

Noah Webster

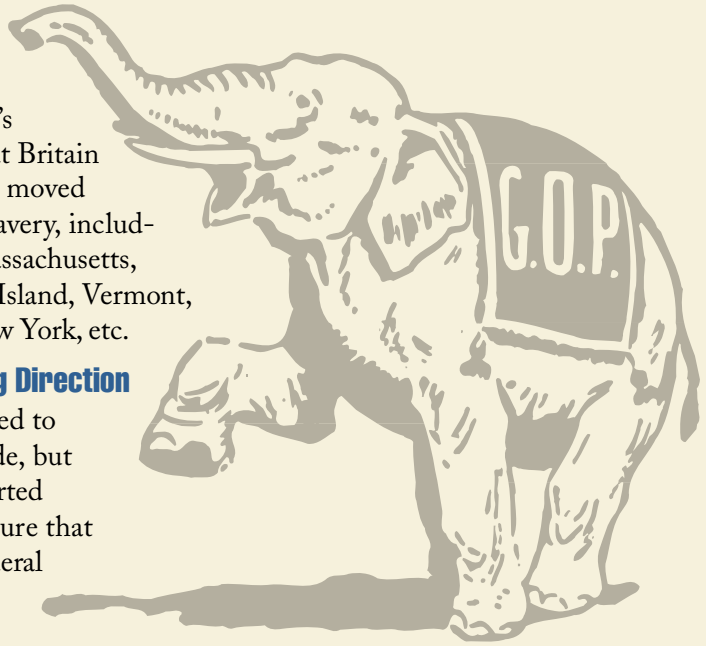


Following America's separation from Great Britain in 1776, several States moved towards abolishing slavery, including Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, etc.

Moving in the Wrong Direction

In 1783, six States voted to end slavery nationwide, but the States that supported slavery worked to ensure that the newly formed federal Constitution would remain silent on the issue. It was thus left to each State individually either to abolish or to preserve slavery. Trying to achieve as much as possible within the limitations placed on the new national government, in 1789 President George Washington signed a law prohibiting slavery in any federal territory. The belief was that with these federal territories forming new anti-slave States (e.g., Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, etc.), the slave-holding States would soon be outnumbered and would be pressured to abandon that evil.

This plan never came to fruition, however, for in 1820, shortly after the death of most of the Founding Fathers, Congress changed the rules in the so-called Missouri Compromise; this change permitted the admission of the same



number of new slave States as new non-slave States. From this point forward, pro-slavery forces achieved a steady progression of legislative victories.

A New Party with a New Vision

In 1850, the Fugitive Slave Law was passed. This law encouraged the hunting and kidnapping of runaway slaves and severely penalized those who hid or rescued a slave. (Recall that the Bible in Exodus 21:16 pronounced the death penalty for those who kidnapped for purposes of slavery – a Scripture expressly violated by this immoral law.) In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act passed, allowing slavery to be introduced into a new vast part of American territory. Following this series of legislative setbacks, a number of abolitionists in Congress

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revolted against the Democrats then in charge of Congress and started the Republican party.

The most obvious difference between the Republican and the Democrat parties was their stands on slavery. For example, nearly every plank in the original 1856 Republican platform called for the abolition of slavery and the granting of civil rights to African-Americans. However, the Democrat platform declared:

All efforts of the abolitionists, or others, made to induce Congress to interfere with questions of slavery, or to take incipient [to initiate] steps in relation thereto, are calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences, and all such efforts have the inevitable tendency to diminish the happiness of the people.

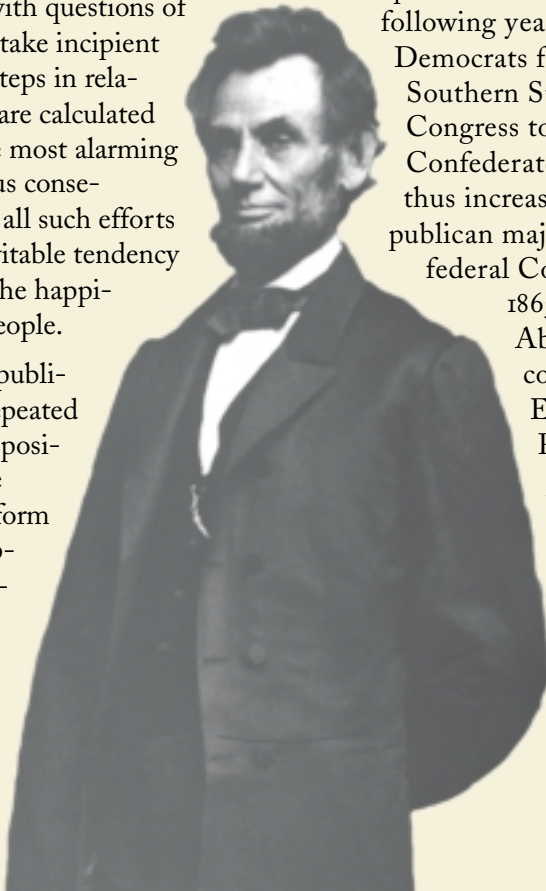
The 1860 Republican platform repeated its anti-slavery positions, while the Democrat platform declared its support for the Supreme Court's infamous *Dred Scott* decision (that African-Americans

were not people but property). The Democrat platform also praised the Fugitive Slave Law and condemned those who opposed it:

The enactments of State legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the Fugitive Slave Law are hostile in character, subversive of the Constitution, and revolutionary in their effect.

American voters in 1860 looked at the difference in the two parties and chose Abraham Lincoln as President; they also gave him a

Republican Congress. The following year, many Democrats from the Southern States left Congress to serve in the Confederate legislature, thus increasing the Republican majority in the federal Congress. In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation proclaiming freedom to slaves held by the Southern States in rebellion against the United



States. However, it was doubted whether the President had the constitutional authority to issue this order, so in 1865 Congress passed the 13th Amendment to abolish slavery. (Significantly, the wording for that Amendment was taken from the 1789 anti-slavery law passed under George Washington.)

True Partisanship

The Amendment abolishing slavery passed the House by a margin of 119 to 56 in a vote almost completely along partisan lines. Of the 88 Republicans in the House, all (100%) voted to end slavery; of the 66 Democrats, only 16 (22%) voted to end slavery; and of the 21 third-party representatives (Whigs, Unionists, Emancipationists, etc.), 15 (71%) voted to end that institution.

In the Senate, the Amendment passed 38 to 6. Of the 30 Republican Senators, all (100%) voted to end slavery; of the 8 Democrats, only 3 (38%) voted to do so; and of the 6 third-party Senators, 5 (83%) voted to end slavery.

(President Lincoln was so pleased with the abolition of sla-



The celebration on the floor of Congress following the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment.

very that he personally signed the 13th Amendment. The Constitution does not require the approval of the President for the passage of an Amendment, and the 13th Amendment is the only one of the 27 Amendments to be signed by a President. Lincoln's signature was indicative both of his strong opposition to slavery and of his joy at the ending of that evil.)

A Landmark Event and a Landmark Sermon

The 13th Amendment had passed Congress on January 31, 1865, and

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to commemorate that important event, the House invited an African American minister, the Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, to preach a sermon in the House Chambers. Significantly, the Democrats in the House did not join in inviting the Rev. Garnet to speak in the House, so the invitation was extended almost solely by Republicans. Rev. Garnet's church, the Fifteenth Street Presbyterian Church of Washington, DC, was so pleased with this honor bestowed on their pastor that they passed the following resolution:

Whereas, The adoption by Congress of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States abolishing slavery forever throughout our land is an event so important and fraught with so much interest to the nation as to call forth our profoundest gratitude to God, and

Whereas, The Chaplain of the House of Representatives, Rev. Wm. H. Channing, together with a number of the Republican members of the House, believing

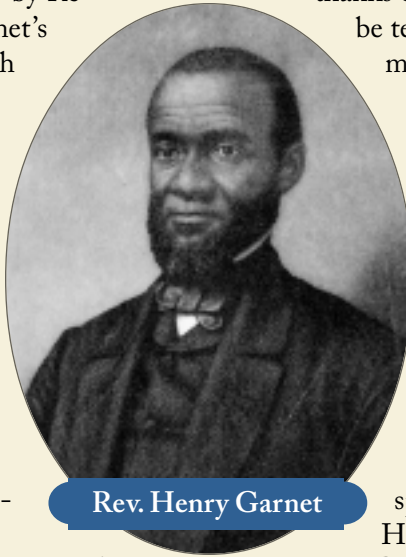
that it would be eminently wise and proper to have some public religious service to commemorate such an auspicious event, requested our pastor, Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, to deliver a memorial discourse on the second Sabbath of February, 1865.

Therefore: Resolved, That the thanks of the congregation be tendered to those members of the Senate and House of Representatives who voted for said amendment."

On February 12, 1865, Rev. Garnet preached his sermon, becoming the first African-American ever to speak in the US House Chambers.

Rev. Garnet began that address with a recollection of his own experiences:

What is slavery? Too well do I know what it is. I will present to you a bird's-eye view of it; and it shall be no fancy picture but one that is sketched by painful experience. I was born among the cherished institutions of slavery. My earliest recollections of parents, friends, and the home of my



Rev. Henry Garnet

childhood are clouded with its wrongs. The first sight that met my eyes was my Christian mother enslaved.

He then reviewed the prominent leaders of both church and state who had strongly opposed slavery:

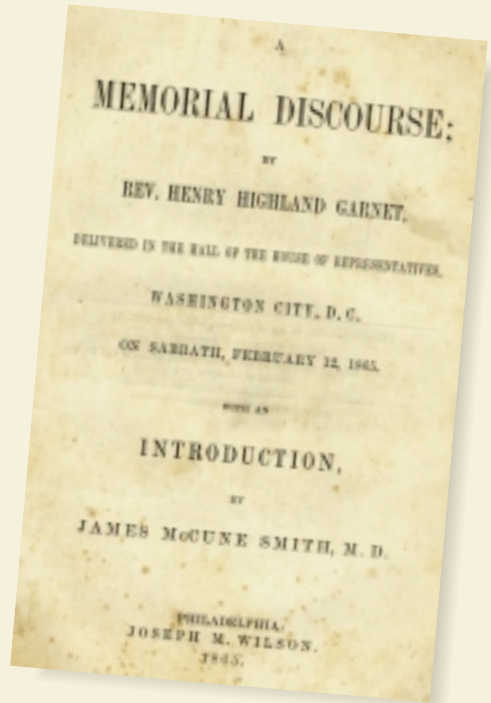
Augustine, Constantine, Ignatius, Polycarp, Maximus, and the most illustrious lights of the ancient church denounced the sin of slave-holding.

Thomas Jefferson said, at a period of his life when his judgment was matured and his experience was ripe, “There is preparing, I hope, under the auspices of heaven, a way for a total emancipation.”

The sainted Washington said, near the close of his mortal career and when the light of eternity was beaming upon him, “It is among my first wishes to see some plan adopted by which slavery in this country shall be abolished by law. I know of but one way by which this can be done, and that is by legislative action, and so far as my vote can go, it shall not be wanting.” . . .

Patrick Henry said, “We should transmit to posterity our abhorrence of slavery.” So also thought the Thirty-Eighth Congress.

Lafayette proclaimed these words: “Slavery is a dark spot on



A copy of Rev. Garnet’s sermon preached to Congress at the request of the Republicans upon passage of the 13th Amendment.

the face of the nation.” God be praised, that stain will soon be wiped out. . . .

Moses, the greatest of all law-givers and legislators, said, while his face was yet radiant with the light of Sinai: “Whoso stealeth a man and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death” [Exodus 21:16]. The destroying angel has gone forth through this land to execute the fearful penalties of God’s broken law.

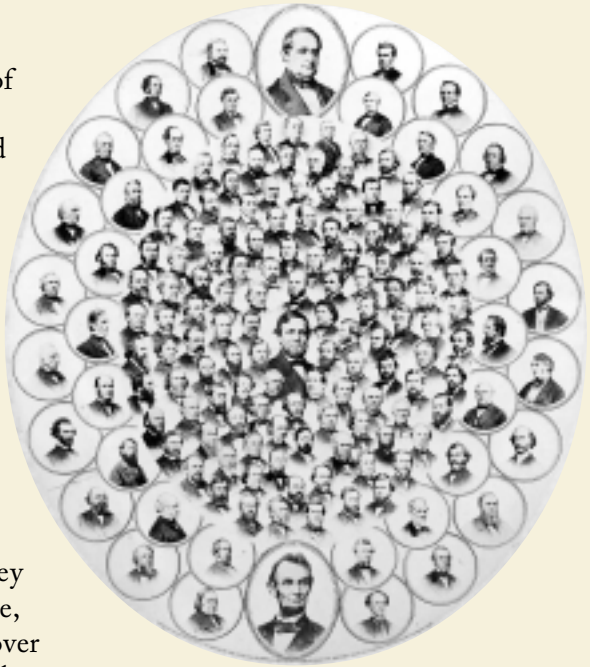
The other day, when the light of Liberty streamed through this

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marble pile, and the hearts of the noble band of patriotic statesmen leaped for joy, and this our national capitol shook from foundation to dome with the shouts of a ransomed people, then methinks the spirits of Washington, Jefferson, the Jays, the Adamases, and Franklin, and Lafayette, and Giddings, and Lovejoy, and those of all the mighty and glorious dead remembered by history because they were faithful to truth, justice, and liberty, were hovering over the august assembly. Though unseen by mortal eyes, doubtless they joined the angelic choir, and said, Amen. . . .

Rev. Garnet then called on the States to ratify the Amendment:

Let the verdict of death which has been brought in against slavery by the Thirty-Eighth Congress be affirmed and executed by the people. Let the gigantic monster perish. Yes, Perish now, and perish forever! . . . Let slavery die. It has had a long and fair trial. God Himself has pleaded against it. The enlightened nations of the earth have condemned it. Its death warrant is signed by God and man. Do not commute its sentence. Give it no respite, but



The members of the 38th Congress who voted to abolish slavery.

let it be ignominiously executed.

Rev. Garnet concluded by praising the leaders who had finally brought slavery in America to an end:

Honorable Senators and Representatives! Illustrious rulers of this great nation! I cannot refrain this day from invoking upon you, in God's name, the blessings of millions who were ready to perish but to whom a new and better life has been opened by your humanity, justice, and patriotism. You have said, "Let the Constitution of the country be so amended that slavery and invol-

untary servitude shall no longer exist in the United States except in punishment for crime.” Surely an act so sublime could not escape Divine notice; and doubtless the deed has been recorded in the archives of Heaven.

Additional Civil Rights Protections

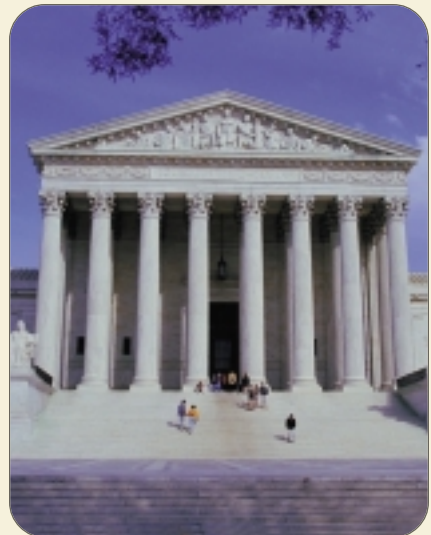
While Congress had passed the Amendment, some voices in the South bitterly protested the abolition of slavery and vowed to withhold from former slaves the rights belonging to other citizens in their State.

Republicans in Congress addressed this problem over the next several years by passing a series of seven civil rights bills. (Unfortunately, most of these laws were eventually struck down by the Supreme Court, including the 1875 Republican law prohibiting segregation – overturned by the Court in *Plessey v. Ferguson*. It was not until 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education* that the Court reversed itself and upheld that Republican law. In fact, the resurrection of civil rights in the famous 1968 Civil Rights Act was based largely upon the Reconstruction Civil Rights Acts passed by Republicans a century earlier.) In 1868, Congress passed the 14th Amendment to ensure that freed slaves and other African-Americans would enjoy all

the privileges and rights conveyed by being a citizen either of the State or the nation.

Ratification of both the 13th and 14th Amendments became a requisite for the readmission of the seceded Southern States back into the Union. But most of those States, at that time still controlled by Democrat State legislatures, refused to ratify the Amendments. As a result, Republicans briefly took control of those southern legislatures and ratified the Amendments, thereby achieving the readmission of those States into the Union.

The Democrats lashed out fiercely against the Republican civil rights measures – as, for example,



Many early Republican civil rights bills were overturned by the Supreme Court.

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The Ku Klux Klan was formed to halt the progress made by blacks and Republicans.

in the 1868 Democrat platform:

Instead of restoring the Union, it [the Republican Party] has, so far as in its power, dissolved it, and subjected ten States, in time of profound peace, to military despotism and Negro supremacy.

We demand the abolition of the Freedman's Bureau and all political instrumentalities designed to secure Negro supremacy.

More Partisanship

The passage of the 14th Amendment, much like the 13th Amendment, was also along partisan lines. In the House, it passed 138 to 36. Of the 134 Republicans in the House, 128 (96%) voted to provide civil rights to former slaves; of the 36 Democrats, none (0%) voted to

give civil rights to African Americans; and of the 11 third-party representatives, 10 (91%) voted in favor of racial civil rights.

In the Senate, the vote was 33 to 11. Of the 32 Republican Senators, 30 (94%) voted for the measure; of the 6 Democrats, none (0%) voted for civil rights; and of the 6 others, 3 (50%) voted for racial civil rights.

As the civil rights secured on the federal level began to move forward across the nation, Democrats worked hard at the State level to regain control of the State legislatures and halt the progress made by blacks and Republicans. To support this effort, a Democrat constituency group was formed to fight both blacks and Republicans. The name of this group? The Ku Klux Klan. In fact, extensive hearings held by the US Congress in 1868 document the role of the KKK in working with southern Democrats to halt voting by blacks.

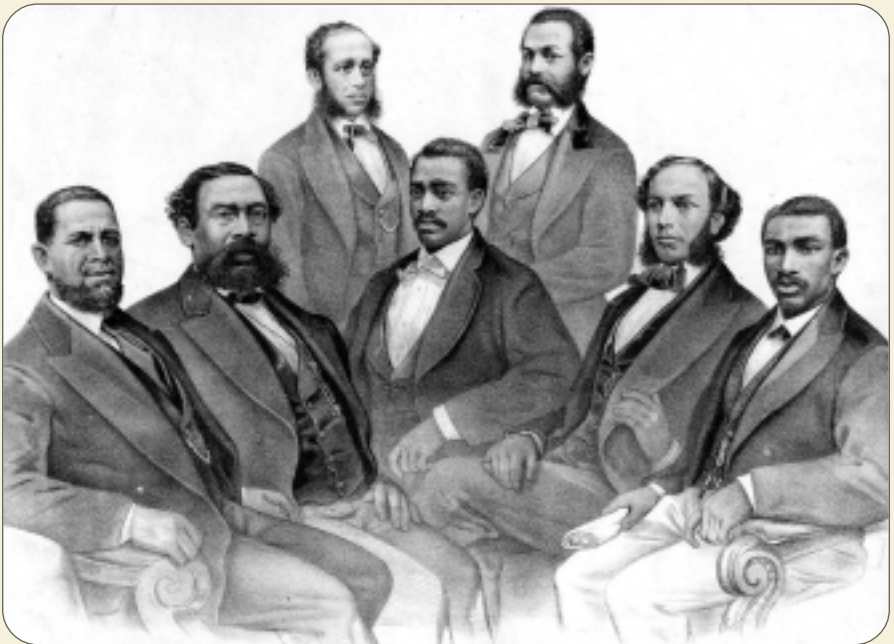
(As an aside, during those congressional hearings, witness Robert Flournoy testified to a fact unknown by many today: "I am a considerable sort of a Negro man and talk with the Negroes wherever I go. I have never met in all my intercourse with the Negroes of Mississippi but one single Negro who professed to be a Democrat, and that was in the town of Oxford. He was a waiter in a hotel, and he informed me

that he was a Democrat. I tried to convert him and failed, and left him a Democrat.”)

In response to the efforts of the KKK and of Democrats in the Southern States, the 15th Amendment – the final of the three post-Civil War civil rights amendments – was passed in 1870 to guarantee to African-American males the right to vote (the first ever expansion in federal voting rights). And just like the two previous civil rights Amendments, the 15th also passed along partisan lines.

A New Color of Congressional Leadership

These three civil rights amendments to the Constitution – the basis of all current racial civil rights – were initiated and passed by Republicans over the strong opposition of Democrats. African-Americans immediately experienced the benefits of these amendments as scores of blacks were elected to the State and federal legislatures, and all of these leaders were elected as Republicans. For example, 42 African-Americans were elected to the



Some of the first African-American congressman included: Sen. H.R. Revels (MS), Rep. Benjamin Turner (AL), Rep. Robert DeLarge (SC), Rep. Josiah Walls (FL), Rep. Jefferson Long (GA), Rep. Joseph Rainey (SC), Rep. Brown Elliot (SC)

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legislature in Texas, 50 in South Carolina, 127 in Louisiana, etc.

On the federal level, Hiram Rhodes Revels from Mississippi became the first African-American Senator in Congress, filling the seat previously held by Confederate President Jefferson Davis; and Republican Joseph H. Rainey from South Carolina became the first African-American member of the U.S. House of Representatives. (Several other blacks were also elected to the U.S. Congress from Southern States during that era – always as Republicans.)

The abolition of slavery and the securing of the first national civil rights for African-Americans is a significant chapter in America's history. Regrettably, too many Americans today know nothing of how these rights were secured. While today's politically-correct revisionist historians regularly misportray the struggle for these civil rights, the public records and the official documents nevertheless record the truth. ■

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Upcoming Presentations

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FEBRUARY 2002

9-11 Honolulu, HI

22-23 Charlotte, NC

MARCH 2002

4 Tyler, TX

9 Boise, ID

10 Meridian, ID

22 Austin, TX

24 New Braunfels, TX

APRIL 2002

12-13 Houston, TX

19-20 Raleigh, NC

24 Dumas, TX

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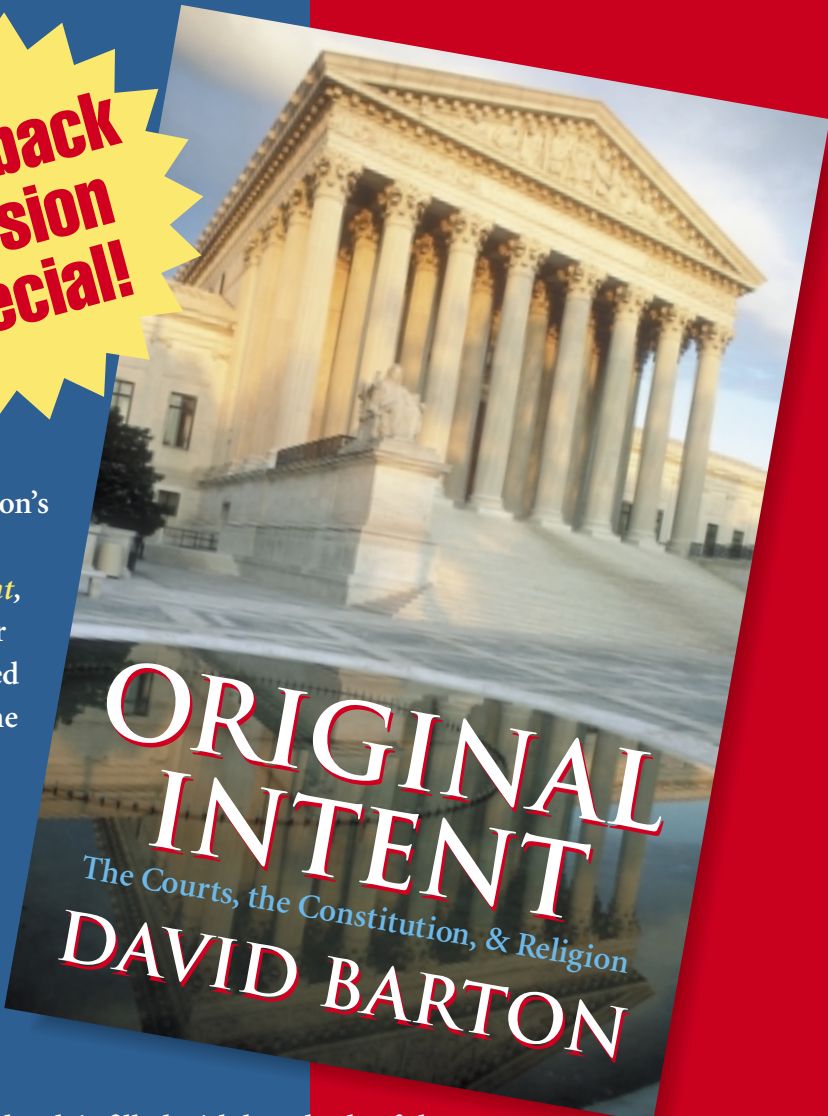
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*“You see the distress that we are in. Come
let us rebuild . . . that we may no longer be
a reproach.” Nehemiah 2:17*