Chapter 15: The South in Reconstruction
Objectives: The New South

- We will study the motives and premise of why some Southerners sought to industrialize the South into the “new south.”
- We will examine the birth of Jim Crow and overt segregation to marginalize the former slaves.
- We will examine African American response to Jim Crow.
Pro_26:11  As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly.
By the end of 1877, after the last withdrawal of federal troops, every southern state government had been redeemed by white democrats.

Many white southerners rejoiced at the restoration of what they liked to call “home rule.”

But in reality, political power in the region was soon more restricted than at any time since the Civil War.
The Redeemers:

- Once again, the South fell under the control of a powerful conservative oligarchy, whose members were known variously as the “redeemers.”
- To themselves and their supporters, or the “Bourbons, a term for aristocrats used by some of their critics.
- In some places the Old Planter class returned to power.
Industrialization and the New South:

- Some white southern leaders in the post-Reconstruction era hoped to see their region become the home of a vigorous industrial economy.
- These leaders argued that the South had lost the war because its economy had been unable to compete with the modernized manufacturing capacity of the North.
- Now the region must out Yankee the Yankees.
Industrialization and the New South:

- Southern Industry expanded dramatically after Reconstruction.
- Most visible was the growth of textile manufacturing which increased nine-fold in the last twenty years of the century.
- New England Factories moved to the South because of the abundance of water power and ready supply of cheap labor.
Industrialization and the New South:

- Because of the heavy casualties sustained by males, many factory workers were women.
- Railroad development increased substantially in the post-Reconstruction years.
- At a rate far greater than that of the nation at large.
- Tracks doubled between 1880 and 1890 in the South.
Tenants and Sharecroppers:

- Despite significant growth in Southern industry, the region remained primarily agrarian.
- The most important economic reality in the post-Reconstruction South therefore was the impoverished state of agriculture.
Tenants and Sharecroppers:

- The 1870s and 1880s saw an accelerated trends that had begun in the immediate post war years.
- The imposition of systems of tenantry and debt peonage on much of the region.
- During Reconstruction, perhaps a third or more of the farmers in the South were tenants.
Tenants and Sharecroppers:

- By 1900, the figure increased to 70 percent.
- That as in large part the result of the crop-lien system, the system by which farmers borrowed money against their future crops often fell into deeper debt.
Tenants and Sharecroppers:

- Tenantry took several forms.
- Farmers who owned took, equipment and farm animals, or who had the money to buy them usually paid an annual cash rent for their land.
- But many farmers including most black ones had no money or equipment.
Tenants and Sharecroppers:

- Landlords would supply them with land, a crude house, a few tools, seed, and sometimes a mule.
- In return, farmers would promise the landlord a large share of the annual crop hence the term “sharecropping.”
- After paying their landlords and their local merchants, sharecroppers seldom had anything left to sell on their own.
African Americans and the New South

- Even in the midst of racial discrimination, a distinct middle class did emerge in the African American community.
- Although inferior to Whites, there were some who acquired property, build small businesses, or enter professions.
African Americans and the New South

- A few African Americans accumulated substantial fortunes by establishing banks and insurance companies to serve the black community.
- One was Maggie Lena, a black woman who became the first female bank president in the U.S. who founded a bank in Richmond.
African Americans and the New South

- A cardinal tenant of the rising African American middle class was the support of northern missionary societies.
- Also a to a far lesser extent a few State Governments also supported freedmen.
- These state governments expanded the network of black colleges and institutes that were established during Reconstruction into a important educational system.
African Americans and the New South

- The chief spokesman for this commitment to education, and for a time the major spokesman for African Americans in the South and beyond was Booker T. Washington.
- Founder and president of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.
- He was born into slavery but worked his way out of poverty to get an education.
African Americans and the New South

- Washington urged other blacks to follow the same road to self-improvement.
- Washington’s message was both cautious and hopeful.
- African Americans should attend school, learn skills, and establish a solid footing in agriculture and the trades.
- Industrial, not classical education should be their goal.
- They should also aspire for white middle class standards of dress, speech and expectations.
- This is the path to win respect and lead to equality.
African Americans and the New South

- Washington also asserted that African Americans should forgo agitating for political rights and concentrate on self improvement and preparation for equality.
- In a famous speech in Georgia in 1895, Washington outlined a philosophy of race relations that became widely known as the Atlanta Compromise.
African Americans and the New South

- In Washington’s speech, he said that agitating the question of social equality is the “extremist folly.”
- Rather African Americans should focus on economic gains.
- He emphasized education, self-improvement and self-advancement.
- But his message was also an implicit promise that African Americans would not openly challenge the system of segregation.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- Few White Southerners accepted the idea of racial equality.
- That the former slaves acquired any legal and political rights at all after emancipation was in large part the result of federal support.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- That support vanished after 1877. Federal troops withdrew, Congress lost interest.
- Supreme Court effectively stripped the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment of much of their significance.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- In the so-called Civil Rights cases of 1883, the court ruled that the fourteenth amendment prohibited state governments from discriminating against people because of race but did not restrict private organizations, or individuals from doing so.
- Thus railroads, hotels, workplaces could legally practice segregation.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- Eventually the court validated state legislation that institutionalized the separation of races in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896).
- A case involving a Louisiana law that required separate arrangements for the races on railroads.
- The court held that separate accommodations did not deprive blacks of equal rights if the accommodations were equal.
- A decision that survived for years as part of legal basis for segregated schools.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- In Cumming v. County Board of Education, the court ruled that laws establishing separate schools for whites were valid even if there was no comparable schools for African Americans.
- African American voting rights were also curbed in the 1890s called franchise restrictions.
- Some White farmers began to demand complete black disenfranchisement both because of racial prejudice and because they objected to the black vote being used against them by conservative planters.
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- At the same time, many members of the conservative elite began to fear that poor whites might unite politically with poor African Americans to challenge them.
- Thus both the rich and poor Whites who supported Jim Crow sought to restrict the Black vote.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- Poor Whites also began to support further franchise restrictions.
- They found ways to evade the Fifteenth Amendment which prohibited states from denying anyone the right to vote because of race.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- Two devices merged before 1900 to accomplish the goal.
- One was the poll tax or some form of property qualification; few African Americans were prosperous enough to meet such requirements.
- Another was the literacy or understanding test which required voters to demonstrate an ability to read and to interpret the Constitution.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- Literacy Test was difficult to pass and such restrictions were applied unequally.
- Literacy tests for whites were sometimes much easier than those for blacks.
- Even so it did affect poor white voters also.
- By the late 1890s, the black vote had decreased by 62 percent, the white vote by 26 percent.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- One result was that some states passed so-called grandfather laws, permitting men who could not meet the literacy and property qualifications to be enfranchised (able to vote) if their ancestors had voted before Reconstruction began.

- Thus barring the descendants of slaves from polling while allowing white access to them.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- Laws restricting the franchise and segregating schools were only part of a network of statutes known as Jim Crow laws.
- That by the first years of the Twentieth Century had institutionalized an elaborate system of segregation reaching into almost every area of Southern life.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- Blacks and Whites could not ride in the same railroad cars, sit in the same waiting rooms, use the same washrooms, eat in the same restaurants, or sit in the same theaters.
- Jim Crow laws also stripped African Americans of many of the modest social, economic, and political gains they had made in the most fluid atmosphere of the late nineteenth century.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- The laws served too as a means for whites to retain control of social relations between the races in the newly growing cities and towns of the South.
- Where traditional patterns of deference and subjugation were more difficult to preserve than the other countryside.
The 1890s also witnessed a dramatic increase in white violence against blacks, which along with the Jim Crow laws, served to inhibit black agitation for equal rights.

The worst such violence, lynching blacks by white mobs, either because the victims were accused of crimes or because they had seemed somehow to violate their expected station reached appalling levels.
The rise of lynchings shocked the conscience of many white Americans, in a way that other forms of racial injustice did not.

Almost from the start, there was a substantial anti-lynching movement.

In 1892, Ida B. Wells, a committed black journalist, launched what became an international anti-lynching movement with a series of impassioned articles after the lynching of three of her friends in Memphis, Tennessee, her home.
The Birth of Jim Crow:

- The movement gradually gathered strength in the first years of the twentieth century, attracting substantial support from whites, particularly white women, in both the North and South.
- Its goal was a federal anti-lynching law, which would allow the national government to do what state and local governments in the South were unwilling to do.
- Punish those responsible for lynchings
But Jim Crow distracted and pitted Blacks and poorer whites from the growing gap that allowed the Bourbon Oligarchy to even have a firm grip of Southern society.