**Six States Re-admitted; Negro Legislators and “Carpet Bagers”**

In some of the restored states, especially in South Carolina, there were more negroes than white men. The negroes now got control of these states. They had been slaves all their lives, and were so ignorant that they did not even know the letters of the alphabet. Yet they now sat in the state legislatures and made the laws. After the war many industrious Northern men settled in the South, but besides these, certain greedy adventurers went there eager to get political office and political spoils.

These “Carpet Baggers”, as they were called, used the ignorant freed-men as tools to carry out their own selfish purposes. The result was that the negro legislators, under the direction of the “Carpet Baggers,” plundered and, for the time, well-nigh ruined the states that had the misfortune to be subject to their rule. *

After a time the white population throughout the South resolved that they would no longer endure this state of things. Partly by peaceable and partly by violent means they succeeded in getting the political power into their own hands, and the reign of the “Carpet-Bagger” and the negro came to an end.

WHITE REPUBLICANS IN THE SOUTH

…the Republicans depended for their support in the South on African Americans and on people who are now known as carpetbaggers and scalawags. Both of these terms were originally insulting names given to these groups by southerners. Carpetbaggers were northern Republicans who moved to the South after the Civil War. Their names referred to a kind of suitcase, and it implied that these northerners had hastily migrated into the region to take advantage of the political situation. Carpetbaggers were mainly former Union army officers and Freedmen’s Bureau officials. Scalawags, a term that means “rascals,” were southern whites who became Republicans. They tended to be men who had been Whigs, who were interested in economic development, or who lived in the more isolated areas. Many scalawags were poor.

AFRICAN AMERICANS IN OFFICE

African Americans were key, though underrepresented, members of the Republican Party in the south. Determined to win their share of political power, they organized to promote the interests of their community. In 1865 the African American state convention addressed these words to the people of South Carolina:

Now that we are free men, now that we have been lifted up by the providence of God to manhood, we have resolved to come forward, and, like MEN, speak and act for ourselves.

Many southern whites criticized the presence of African Americans in Reconstruction governments. They accused African American officials of being corrupt and incompetent. In reality, the South’s African American officials appeared to have been no worse or no better than their white counterparts. Many served with distinction. Between 1867 and 1869, approximately 1,000 men attended state constitutional conventions throughout the South. Some 265 of them were African Americans; at least 107 were former slaves. Many were veterans of the Union army, ministers, artisans, farmers, and teachers.

African Americans held high office in the South during Reconstruction, though the number of such officials was small relative to the African American population. African Americans were, after all, a majority in Louisiana, Mississippi, and South Carolina. One African American, P.B.S. Pinchback, briefly served as governor of Louisiana. Six African Americans were lieutenant governors, and several others held high state office. Meanwhile, sixteen African Americans went to Congress, and Hiram Revels, an educator and minister, became a United States senator from Mississippi in 1870. Mississippi also sent former sheriff Blanche K. Bruce to the Senate in 1874. In addition, 600 African Americans were members of various state legislatures and hundreds of others held local offices. While some were illiterate—70 percent of African Americans could not read or write in 1880, compared to under 10 percent of whites—many were educated and virtually all were capable of making informed judgments about major issues.