
Reconstruction: American Redemption?

In 1898, a group of white men in Wilmington, North Carolina overthrew the town's elected (and somewhat racially progressive) Republican leaders. The coup was part of what many white Southerners called "redemption," or the taking back of the South from what they considered black and northern rule. In this episode, we are going to explore how in the last three decades of the nineteenth-century, many—but not all—white Americans, most of whom were Christians, defined citizenship as belonging only to white people and defined the country as, in its essence, a white, Christian nation.

Key Questions:

1. What were some of the post-war possibilities for race relations in the United States?
2. What role did Christians play in creating the Jim Crow South in the decades after the Civil War?

Reflection Questions:

1. What, in this episode, most surprised or challenged you?
2. Some white Southerners claimed that the pre-Civil War South was "godly" because it respected the Bible. What do you think makes a society godly—or do you think it is a term that should be used for societies?
3. In the video, Sarah argues (following historian Ed Blum) that white Americans reconciled after the Civil War on the basis of injustice for black people. How have you heard the term "reconciliation" used in racial (or other) contexts? Does it include justice? Should it?
4. One of the questions in this episode (and in others) is who the nation really is for. What do people have to do or be to be considered a real citizen? How do you think various groups of people (e.g. black, white, Christian, not Christian, young, old etc.) in the United States would answer that question today? How would you?