

# Black Citizenship and the Republican Party in Reconstruction Alabama

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PERHAPS NO ASPECT OF ALABAMA HISTORY HAS RECEIVED

more scholarly attention in the past decade than the period of Reconstruction. Studies by Sarah van Woolfolk Wiggins,<sup>1</sup> William Cash,<sup>2</sup> and Robert Gilmour,<sup>3</sup> have examined the political, social, and economic activities of whites during the period; works by Peter Kolchin,<sup>4</sup> William Warren Rogers and David Ward,<sup>5</sup> and John Meyers,<sup>6</sup> have evaluated the condition of freedmen; while articles, dissertations, and theses by various other authors have investigated a host of related subjects.<sup>7</sup>

1 Wiggins, "The Role of the Scalawag in Alabama Reconstruction," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1965) ; "Five Men Called Scalawags," *The Alabama Review*, XVII (January, 1964) , 45-55; "Alabama Attitudes Toward the Republican Party in 1868 and 1965," *The Alabama Review*, XX (January, 1967), 27-33.

2 Cash, "Alabama Republicans During Reconstruction: Personal Characteristics, Motivations, and Political Activities of Party Activists, 1867-1880," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1973) .

3 Gilmour, "The Other Emancipation: Studies in the Society and Economy of Alabama Whites during Reconstruction," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1972) .

4 Kolchin, *First Freedom: The Responses of Alabama's Blacks to Emancipation and Reconstruction* (Westport, Conn., 1972) .

5 Rogers and Ward, *August Reckoning: Jack Turner and Racism in Post-Civil War Alabama* (Baton Rouge, 1973) . Also Rogers, *The One-Gallused Rebellion: Agrarianism in Alabama, 1865-1896* (Baton Rouge, 1970) .

6. Meyers, "The Alabama Freedmen and the Economic Adjustments During Presidential Reconstruction, 1865-1867," *The Alabama Review*, XXVI (October, 1973) , 252-66.

7 Joseph M. Brittain, "Negro Suffrage and Politics in Alabama Since 1870," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Indiana, 1958) ; Jimmie F. Gross, "Ala-

These writers, called revisionists, have shown that Alabama Reconstruction was neither the nadir in the state's history, nor an era of Negro rule, nor a time when impecunious carpet-baggers and destitute scalawags, manipulating ignorant Negroes, ravaged and plundered the state; and in doing so have laid to rest these three long-standing myths about the period.

A major focus of this recent writing has been a careful re-examination of the Republican party: its leadership, campaign strategy, constituency, and guiding principles.<sup>8</sup> Although useful information has been offered concerning the role of native whites and blacks in the party, pre-War backgrounds of Republican leaders, and internal factionalism, this re-evaluation fails in one vitally important respect: to define and analyze clearly the most critical issue facing the party, whether or not full citizenship rights should be extended to blacks?<sup>9</sup> On the surface this question seems rhetorical: Did not freedmen form 90 percent of the party's membership? Did not the party platform defend the concept of political and civil equality? Could Republicanism have survived without enfranchised blacks? But full citizenship, at least in the minds of Afro-Americans, entailed more than membership in a party, promises in a platform, or even voting, though these privileges were surely important. It meant that the ideals put

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bama Politics and the Negro, 1874-1901," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Georgia, 1970) ; Loren Schweningen, "James Rapier and Reconstruction," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 1972) . Though marred by several citation errors, for a more complete bibliography of the recent literature on Alabama Reconstruction, see: Robert Reid, "Changing Interpretations of the Reconstruction Period in Alabama History," *The Alabama Review*, XXVII (October, 1974) , 263-81.

<sup>8</sup> See especially Kolchin, Wiggins, Cash, and Rogers above.

<sup>9</sup> Perhaps the most disappointing of these studies is Cash, "Alabama Republicans During Reconstruction." Though offering a "voluminous roster of data," "machine readable" on a "magnetic tape," Cash presents statistics on, among other things, how many northern Republicans married Alabama women (p. 388) , hut fails to quantify the vitally important voting records of Republicans in the state legislature. *Ibid.*, *passim*.

forth in the Declaration of Independence, "That all men are created equal," should be put into practice. Blacks should thus be able to enter public places freely; they should be able to attain positions of responsibility in government; and they should be able to secure positions of leadership in the party. A number of influential white Republicans, perhaps a majority, however, entertained extremely conservative views on such a broad interpretation of citizenship rights, especially if it meant comingling with blacks in public places, or competing with them for political office. Some of these men even doubted the wisdom of extending the franchise to freedmen, hoping eventually to build a white Republican party in the South. Such a fundamental disagreement on such a basic question—what was the nature of black citizenship?—led to a bitter inner-party conflict, one that in the end, perhaps more than any other consideration, brought ruin to the party of Lincoln in the cradle of the old Confederacy.

The debate on this issue began moments after the first state-wide Republican convention convened in Montgomery, June 1867, and a delegate asked the membership to seat federal district judge Richard Busteed. Two Mobile blacks vigorously objected. "Busteed recently chaired a meeting at which there were resolutions proposed . . . [that] would eventually place such men in power as would jeopardize all the rights conferred on the colored men by [the] recent acts of Congress, [granting blacks the franchise,]" ex-slave Ovid Gregory announced.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the judge had, in public and private speeches, questioned the capacity of freedmen to understand the meaning of citizenship. The second objector, John Canaway, also an ex-slave, asserted that Busteed was no friend of the Negro. "He seems to think our disfranchisement [*sic*] was a great mistake."<sup>11</sup> Countering this, two pre-War Alabama

<sup>10</sup>*Daily State Sentinel*, June 4, 1867.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

residents, ex-Lauderdale County Probate Judge Sidney Cherry Posey and ex-Madison County Whig Nicholas Davis, advised caution. "We must remember that the work of reconstruction is not complete and we must be very cautious how we act."<sup>12</sup> The dispute, with virtually all the 150 delegates choosing sides, lasted the entire first day of the two-day convention, finally ending on the morning of the second day when the delegates voted to exclude the controversial judge.<sup>13</sup> Astutely analyzing the factionalism that had developed at the first state Republican meeting, a reporter noted that "untainted loyalists" had quarreled with "ex-Rebels," "Ultra-Radicals" had chaffed at the slow pace of "Conservative Republicans," and "great diversity of sentiment characterized the Convention."<sup>14</sup> Though Gregory and Carraway had won the first battle, these antagonisms, apparent at the very inception of the party, persisted throughout Reconstruction.

No sooner had the bitterness over the Busted resolution subsided, than hostilities again broke out between the two groups. At the Alabama Constitutional Convention in November 1867, ex-Confederate soldier and conservative Republican Henry Semple suggested that owners of hotels, steamboats, railroads, and "places of public amusement" had the right to demand "reasonable regulations to separate the two races." "Equality of civil rights is not invaded by the adoption of such reasonable regulations . . . to furnish separate accommodations [*sic*] to the two races," Semple said, "so long as the separation shall be demanded by the sentiment of the white race."<sup>15</sup> Another ex-Confederate, Joseph Speed, said that the legislature should also provide for the separation

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*; *Florence Journal*, June 6, 1867.

<sup>13</sup> *Montgomery Weekly Advertiser*, June 4, 1867.

<sup>14</sup> *Mobile Nationalist*, June 13, 1867.

<sup>15</sup> *Official Journal of the Constitutional Convention of the State of Alabama* (Montgomery, 1868), 144-49, hereafter, *Official Journal*; *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, November 27, 1867.

of blacks and whites in the public schools.<sup>16</sup> Gregory and Carraway again objected. "How [can any] delegate go home to his constituents, nineteenth-twentieths of whom are colored," Gregory queried, "after having voted against their enjoying the same rights, in all respects, as white people?" Carraway added, "At present the colored man can not send his wife from one part of the state to another, because she [will] be placed in a smoking car and exposed to the insults of low and obscene white men." He also concluded with a question, "How [can] any friend of the colored man . . . vote against breaking down [such a] monopoly?" They offered resolutions to abolish all laws, regulations, and customs, "Heretofore or at present in existence, wherein distinctions are made on account of caste, color, or former condition of servitude."<sup>17</sup> Though the convention voted 54 to 23 to lay the Semple-Speed amendments on the table, the completed Constitution excluded any provision promising equal protection in public places. And the day before adjournment, twenty-two conservative whites (including Semple and Speed) repudiated the whole document, because it neither provided separate facilities, nor prohibited intermarriage between the races; ten other whites refused to sign the final draft. In all, nearly a third of the Republican membership, mostly native whites, stood solidly against the newly drafted Constitution.<sup>18</sup>

In the midst of the civil rights controversy, Republicans gathered in Montgomery to nominate a state ticket. Again, there was dissension. When the conservatives put forward an all-white ticket headed by William H. Smith, an ex-Alabama Whig, the educated and articulate Negro James Rapier dis-

16 *Daily State Sentinel*, November 26, 1867; United States Congress, *Senate Reports*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., Vol. II, no. 8 (1872), 414-17.

17 *Daily State Sentinel*, November 26, 1867.

18. *Mobile Daily Advertiser and Register*, December 10, 1867; *Official Journal*, 223, 241, 242; *Montgomery Daily Mail*, December 11, 1867; *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, December 7, 1867; *New York Times*, December 28, 1867.

sented, saying that the candidate for governor was "a conservative on the race issue." Rapier was prepared to disavow the entire ticket, unless Smith was replaced with the more moderate Robert Patton, the ex-provisional governor. Though the slate of white candidates remained unchanged, the enmity between Rapier and Smith (which surfaced again in 1870) symbolized the deep divisions in the party.<sup>19</sup>

During the 1868 campaign (over the ratification of the proposed constitution and the election of a state ticket), a number of blacks, like Rapier, denounced "the nominating caucus" and the slate of white candidates.<sup>20</sup> Union Leagues in eight Black Belt counties drafted resolutions criticizing the conservative direction of the party.<sup>21</sup> Some blacks went even further. "We wish to inform you that we have withdrawn from the Republican Party," announced the Limestone County Union League vice-president. "We have been used as tools long enough."<sup>22</sup> Ex-slave Caesar Shorter (Eufaula, Alabama) condemned the proposed Constitution, censured the Republican leaders, and formed a Negro Democratic club.<sup>23</sup> Another ex-slave, Jeremiah Haralson, later a United States Congressman, not only refused to support the Constitution, but later actively campaigned against Grant, for Seymour and Blair.<sup>24</sup> Though only a small number of blacks took such an extreme course, the 1868 election results reflected the discontent among black Republicans. Only 66,000 of the 170,000 registered voters (the majority of whom were black) cast ballots for the victorious Republican ticket, and only 71,000 (less than the required majority) voted in favor of the state Constitu-

<sup>19</sup> *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, December 7, 1867.

<sup>20</sup> *Mobile Daily Register*, December 14, 17, 1867.

<sup>21</sup> *Daily National Intelligencer*, January 8, 1868; *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, December 12, 13, 1867.

<sup>22</sup> *Athens Post*, January 9, 1868.

<sup>23</sup> *Union Springs Times*, December 14, 1867.

<sup>24</sup> *New National Era*, January 22, 1874. For a biographical sketch of Haralson, see *ibid.*

tion.<sup>25</sup> It took a special act of Congress—the fourth Reconstruction act of March 11, 1868—to validate the Alabama Constitution.<sup>26</sup> But not even Congress could pacify the extreme divisions among Alabama Republicans.<sup>27</sup>

Ironically, as black Republicans joined the Conservatives, a number of white Democrats put their hopes in the party of Lincoln. Shortly after the 1868 election, three leading Conservatives—Judge Samuel Rice, an original secessionist; ex-governor Lewis E. Parsons, a long-time Democrat; and Colonel Alexander White, a staunch post-war Conservative—declared their loyalty to the Republican party.<sup>28</sup> Rice believed that Negro suffrage "would condemn itself"; Parsons told his conservative friends "not to be suspicious of my intentions in regard to the negro"; and White contended that blacks would follow their old masters.<sup>29</sup> Such Democratic defections, one Republican newspaper observed, had become commonplace, and though some of the defectors had "done hard service in the Confederate army," the party welcomed their membership.<sup>30</sup> Into Republican ranks thus came men basically opposed to extending full citizenship rights to freedmen. As one newspaper said, "They will have to conciliate the masses of the white people."<sup>31</sup>

In 1870 the breach widened. When Judges Rice and J. W. Haralson, both native Republicans, mounted a campaign to

25 Alabama Secretary of State, Election Returns, State Officers, 1868, (hereafter, Election Returns) , Alabama State Department of Archives and History (ASDAH) , Montgomery.

26 United States Congress, *House Executive Documents*, 40th Cong., 3rd sess., Vol. I, No. 1 (1868) , 2; *Congressional Globe*, 40th Cong., 2nd sess., Vol. I (1868) , 18181826, 1934.

27 *Mobile Daily Register*, April 4, 1868; *Daily State Sentinel*, February 21, April 10, 1868.

28 Wiggins, "Role of the Scalawag," 1965, 13, 17, 59, 80-82, 93, 95, 96, 110.

29 *Ibid.*, 104-11; Wiggins, "Five Men Called Scalawags," 45-55.

30 *Elmore Republican*, January 12, 1872. 31

31 *Ibid.*

re-nominate Governor Smith, they met determined opposition. Rapier and United States Senator George E. Spencer spoke out against the nomination. "The Governor has failed to protect the rights of freedmen," Rapier charged in a heated debate at the Republican state convention in Selma. "He has made bargains with railroad monopolists."<sup>32</sup> Senator Spencer charged that Smith had illegally signed the bonds of certain railroad financiers. And most blacks sided with Rapier and Spencer.<sup>33</sup> "There is a strong undercurrent of feeling against trying Gov. Smith for another term," a Republican editor observed. "This feeling is especially strong with the colored people, who distrust him because of [his railroad favoritism] and the want of vigor that has characterized his treatment of the KKK."<sup>34</sup> After nearly two days of disputation a compromise was finally reached, Smith agreeing to run on the same ticket with a Negro.<sup>35</sup> The conservatives then put up Smith for governor and the moderates nominated Rapier for secretary of state. The settlement, however, was ephemeral. "We are representatives of principle not of color," a white delegate from Hale County asserted moments after the Rapier nomination. "I tell you if a colored man is put upon the ticket, the same element you are trying to conciliate on the one hand, you will lose on the other."<sup>36</sup> Judge Haralson envisioned a political disaster. "The nomination of Rapier . . . will seal the doom of the Republican party."<sup>37</sup> Another delegate pleaded, "In the name of God, I beseech you, don't insist on

<sup>32</sup> *Alabama State Journal*, September 2, 1870; *Selma Weekly Times*, September 23, 1870; *Florence Journal*, September 7, 1870.

<sup>33</sup> *Montgomery Daily Mail*, September 1, 1870; *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, August 30, 1870; *North Alabamian and Times*, September 29, 1870.

<sup>34</sup> *Elmore Republican*, January 12, 1872. In this issue, the newspaper was reminiscing about the 1868 and 1870 campaigns.

<sup>35</sup> *Selma Weekly Times*, September 3, 1870.

<sup>36</sup> *Alabama State Journal*, September 2, 1870.

<sup>37</sup> *Selma Weekly Times*, September 3, 1870.



this thing."<sup>38</sup> Many whites outside the convention, including former collector of customs Albert Elmore, ex-Montgomery postmaster W. J. Bibb, former judge Francis Bugbee, and judge Milton J. Saffold, all pre-War anti-secessionists, became so incensed at the nomination of a black man that they joined the Democrats.<sup>39</sup> In an address to native white Republicans of Alabama, distributed in leaflet form throughout the state, Saffold urged his followers to abandon the party "where a negro can be bought for any purpose."<sup>40</sup> Though most whites refused to take such extreme action, all but a few white Republicans quickly disassociated themselves from the black nominee. Openly admitting their disgust with "the tail end of the ticket," they promised to "work for the balance except Rapier," and vowed to defeat the black candidate for secretary of state in the coming election.<sup>41</sup> "I devote about half an hour a day cursing Rapier," one disgruntled party member admitted." And Governor Smith, described by the *Mobile Daily Register* as "perhaps the most conservative of all native Republicans," confessed bitterly during the campaign, "There is but one chance for a man to be a successful candidate for Governor in Alabama, and that is to run on a ticket with a

38 *Mobile Daily Register*, September 2, 3, 4, 27, 1870; see also *Moulton Advertiser*, September 23, 1870; *North Alabamian and Times*, October 6, 1870; *West Alabamian*, September 7, 1870; *Florence Journal*, September 7, 1870.

38 Wiggins, "Role of the Scalawag," 137-40. As William Cash had indicated in his statistical analysis of "Public Renunciation of the Party by Alabama Republicans . . .", 61% of all those who renounced the party during Reconstruction, did so between 1869 and 1872; and most of them abandoned the party following Rapier's nomination. Cash, "Alabama Republicans During Reconstruction," 333.

40 *An Address to Native White Republicans in Alabama*, n.d., ASDAH; *Alabama Beacon*, September 24, 1870.

41 William L. Caine, Gadsden, Ala., to William H. Smith, Montgomery, Ala., October 8, 1870, Smith Papers, ASDAH; *Selma Weekly Times*, October 29, 1870; *Shelby Guide*, September 27, 1870; *Jacksonville Republican*, October 1, 1870; *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, October 4, 8, 24, 25, 1870.

42 J. M. Caleb Wiley, Geneva, Ala., to William H. Smith, Montgomery, Ala., Smith Papers.

nigger.<sup>43</sup> But not even running on a ticket "with a nigger" could save the party. Smith, Rapier, and the entire slate went down to defeat. The internal dissension had resulted in the Democratic redemption of the state, only two years after Reconstruction had begun.<sup>44</sup>

After the election, ex-Union General Willard Warner emerged as the leader of the conservative wing. He had worked behind the scenes to secure the gubernatorial nomination for Smith, and despite the defeat, he planned to reorganize the party under conservative leadership. With the backing of Parsons, Rice, White, John Larkin, and John Keffer, "four scalawags" and a "carpetbagger," he secured the nomination as collector of the port of Mobile—one of the most powerful patronage jobs in the state. From there, Warner hoped to rebuild the party.<sup>45</sup>

But he soon met strong resistance. "Our party is now badly divided," south Alabama black W. B. Y. Bates wrote Massachusetts Senator Benjamin Butler. "In the interest of our race, our party, and the country . . . [defeat] the confirmation

<sup>43</sup> *Alabama State Journal*, October 21, 1870; "Speech of W. H. Smith, delivered at Florence, Ala., October 8, 1870," Lewis Parsons Papers, ASDAH; *North Alabamian and Times*, October 27, 1870.

<sup>44</sup> United States Congress, *Senate Reports*, 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., Vol. II (1872), 66, 67; *Southern Argus*, April 14, 1870. The conservative faction nearly succeeded in carrying out their plan, however. In the 10 predominately white counties, where Smith had campaigned hardest against Rapier, the black candidate received fewer than 100 votes in each county. Moreover, in every white county in the entire state, the whites on the ticket tallied more votes than their black running mate (4000 total), and in 42 of the 45 white counties, Rapier obtained fewer votes than any candidate, Republican or Democratic. In the end Rapier lost by more than 5000 votes, while Smith lost by a mere 615 votes (76,290 to 76,905). United States Congress, *House Reports*, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., Vol. II (1875), 720.

<sup>45</sup> James T. Rapier, Montgomery, Ala., to George Boutwell, Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, D. C., June 25, 1871, *General Records of the Department of the Treasury*, Applications for Collectors of Customs, Mobile, Alabama, 1843-1903, R. G. 56, Box 5, National Archives, Washington, D. C., hereafter, *Treasury Records*, Customs.

of Warner."<sup>46</sup> Negro Congressman Benjamin Turner asserted that the General had no friends among blacks, and Senator Spencer deplored the appointment as "utterly repugnant and distasteful." He continued, "It has been made over the objections and protests of a large majority of the leading and active Republicans in Alabama."<sup>47</sup> Fourth District Congressman Charles Hays (born in Greene County in 1834 and the owner of a large plantation) and internal revenue assessor James Rapier also objected to Warner. "The quarrels over Federal officers," Hays pointed out, "are seriously damaging [our] prospects."<sup>48</sup> And Rapier added, "We have suffered too much already from what is known in Alabama as 'the fight' between the Senators [Spencer and Warner]. We have lost one eye . . . already." Who made up the bulk of the party in the state? Rapier asked in a letter to high ranking Republican George Boutwell. Blacks and "poor whites—original Union men." They opposed Warner. "It will never do to turn a deaf ear on their wishes." And who supported the general? "Quasi Republicans," like Rice, White, Parsons, and Keifer, who had done their utmost to defeat Grant, and even more, had exerted every effort "*to invalidate* the Amendments."<sup>49</sup>

46 W. B. Y. Bates, Mobile, Ala., to Benjamin Butler, Washington, D. C., December 8, 1871, in *ibid.*

47 Benjamin Turner, Selma, Ala., to George Boutwell, Washington, D. C., June 22, 1871, in *ibid.*; Turner suggested that Timothy Pearson be appointed. Pearson had practiced law in Sewell, Mass., served as an officer in the Union army, and in 1865, had moved to Prairie Bluff, Ala. See: William Claflin, Boston, Mass., to William Smith, Montgomery, Ala., March 12, 1870, in *ibid.*

48 Charles Hays, Washington, D. C., to George S. Boutwell, Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, D. C., March 14, 1871, *General Records of the Department of the Treasury*, Applications for Assessors of Internal Revenue, Alabama, 1865-1873, R. G. 56, Box 1, National Archives, Washington, D. C., hereafter, *Treasury Records*, Internal Revenue; *Alabama State Journal*, September 8, 1871.

49 James Rapier, Montgomery, Ala., to George S. Boutwell, Washington, D. C., June 24, 1871, *Treasury Records*, Customs.

With such criticisms at hand, President Grant eventually withdrew the nomination, but only after another bitter altercation (over what Ravier considered an attempt to deny blacks citizenship) had disrupted the party. Compromise seemed impossible. The regulars were demanding nothing less than full acceptance of the 14th and 15th Amendments—as Ravier pledged, "I shall ever be found at my 'Post' battling for our cause."<sup>50</sup> Conservatives were working in essence to nullify the Amendments. "My honest opinion is that under the garb of Republicanism," one perceptive Republican noted in the midst of the struggle, "We have men in Alabama, some in high places, who are seeking to make themselves acceptable to the Democracy."<sup>51</sup> Indeed, like the Democrats, conservative Republicans sought to abrogate the constitutional guarantees of full citizenship for blacks, while "radical" Republicans fought to conserve those guarantees. It was a strange definition of conservatism and radicalism.

In 1872 most conservative white Republicans joined the Democrats in supporting Liberal Republican Presidential nominee Horace Greeley, whose conservative views on the southern race question were well known.<sup>52</sup> Noting the similarity between this group of Republicans and the Democrats, one editor observed, "They stand both precisely alike . . . There is not a pin to choose between them. They may differ somewhat in personality, . . . but on the facts of the present political schedule they [are in] exact accord. ALL WHIGS ARE NOW DEMOCRATS, AND ALL DEMOCRATS WHIGS."<sup>53</sup> Willard Warner believed that the election of Greeley would result "in the final settlement of all the great

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> *Elmore Republican*, September 27, 1872.

<sup>52</sup> Willard Warner, Mobile, Ala., to Whitelaw Reid, July 10, 1872, in *New York Tribune*, July [20], 1872, clipping in *Treasury Records*, Customs; *Alabama State Journal*, August 15, 1872; *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, July 9, 1872; *Mobile Daily Register*, September 6, 1872; *Jacksonville Republican*, July 27, 1872.

<sup>53</sup> *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, July 6, 1872.

questions of the war on the just basis of National Unity, National Faith, and Equal Rights and justice to all men."<sup>54</sup> Editors Arthur Bingham (*Alabama State Journal*) and E. W. B. Bayzer (*Elmore Republican*) expressed similar views.<sup>55</sup> The Democratic gubernatorial nominee T. H. Herndon saw no difference between himself and the Republican candidate for governor, David P. Lewis. "He was a secessionist; so was I," Herndon said at a Mobile political rally. "He signed the ordinance, thereby pledging his life, his future, and his sacred honor to the state of Alabama in her effort to achieve her independence; so did I. He urged our young men to enlist in the army to fight for that independence; so did I."<sup>56</sup> Indeed, in principle, little separated the conservative wing of the Republican party from the Democracy.

Regular Republicans responded to the challenge by nominating two blacks for Congress. In the southwestern first district moderates chose black incumbent Benjamin Turner as the party's standard bearer. Described as a "man of means, intelligence and very great political influence," Turner had served as tax collector for Dallas County and as Alabama's first black Congressman. A former slave (of Mrs. Elizabeth Turner, and later W. H. Gee, both of Selma, Dallas County), he had managed a livery stable and acquired considerable real property while still in bondage. "Mr. Turner is a man of color," one observer noted, "self made in every sense of the word, fully efficient and qualified."<sup>57</sup> In the southeastern second district the regulars replaced two-term white incumbent

54 Williard Warner, Mobile, Ala., to John Sherman, Washington, D. C., February 29, 1872, Sherman Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

55 *Elmore Republican*, September 27, 1872; *Alabama State Journal*, August 15, 1872.

56 *Mobile Daily Register*, October 26, 1872.

57 For biographical information on Turner, see: Paul Strobach, Washington, D. C., to Secretary of the Treasury, March 10, 1882, *Treasury Records*, Internal Revenue; George Duskin, Ebbitt House, Washington, D. C., to George Turner, Washington, D. C., March 7, 1882, in *ibid.*; *New National Era*, May 9, 1872.

Charles Buckley with black revenue assessor James Rapier. Unlike Turner, Rapier had been born free. The son of a free-black barber John H. Rapier, Sr. (Lauderdale County), he had attended school in Canada (1856-64) and returned to the South after Union troops had captured Nashville.<sup>58</sup> Described as "talented, educated, and intelligent," he had been a central figure in Republican politics since the passage of the Congressional Reconstruction acts. "Not a few of the rebel scribblers for the press and rebel leaders in the state might envy . . . his elevation and education," one newspaperman commented, and "he is a man of great ability."<sup>59</sup>

Conservative Republicans were outraged at the nominations. "Other things being equal, we would not oppose the candidacy of any one on account of his color," Arthur Bingham editorialized in the *Alabama State Journal*, "but it is notorious that in these cases other things are not equal. It is a suicidal sentiment on the part of colored men to nominate one of their own race for Congress simply because he is black, but having no other qualifications whatever for the position, not even the ability to read the English language." Bingham charged that the two black aspirants would "keep alive strife between the races." In words not dissimilar from those used by the Democracy, he exclaimed, "Ignorant [black] dupes, ... poor deluded creatures, they can't control us. This is one thing certain."<sup>60</sup> In Mobile, conservatives nominated pro-Warner black Philip Joseph to run against Turner. "The

58 Loren Schwenger, "John H. Rapier, Sr.: A Slave and Freedman in the Antebellum South," *Civil War History*, Vol. 20 (March, 1974) , 23-34, and "A Fugitive Negro in the Promised Land: James Rapier in Canada, 1856-1864," *Ontario History*, LXVII (June, 1975) , 91-104.

59 Schwenger, "James Rapier and Reconstruction," chapter 2.

60 *Alabama State Journal*, August 30, 1872. Bingham's charges were without foundation; both Turner and Rapier were literate. In fact, one historian of Alabama Reconstruction correctly suggests that Rapier was perhaps the best educated politician in the entire state - white or black. Horace Mann Bond, *Negro Education in Alabama: A Study in Cotton and Steel* (Washington, D. C., 1939) , 17, 26-27, 67, 308.

partisans of the two candidates are [in a] bitter feud with each other," the Mobile *Daily Register* noted with some satisfaction. "The Greeley radicals and the straight-outs of Mobile, had a regular rough and tumble fight. One man had his collar bone broken and several others were wounded." Siding with the Joseph faction, the *Register* described conservatives as "quiet and orderly," and censured the regulars as a "drunken band of howling pervishes," who deliberately broke up meetings and invited bloody riots.<sup>61</sup> In Montgomery the native faction put up both pro-Greeley Republican John McCaleb Wiley (an antebellum judge) and incumbent William Buckley, to run against Rapier. "White scalawags, and carpet-baggers cannot bear the sight of a colored man . . . in such a fat office," the Jacksonville *Republican* observed, "and the result is that he has as his opponent an independent white."<sup>62</sup> And as in Mobile, extreme party rivalries resulted in violence. Gun battles occurred between "the Buckleyites on the one side and the Rapierians on the other"; and at old Elam church, six miles from Montgomery, conservative Robert Knox, accompanied by 50 cohorts, descended upon a Republican gathering, shooting and yelling. One black man was killed. Fearing violence would bring defeat, the regulars beseeched Knox to "depart from [his] spirit of bitterness and persecution."<sup>63</sup> Apparently such appeals had an effect; on election day, though Turner was defeated, Rapier and the state ticket won, wresting the state back from Democratic control.<sup>64</sup>

But the victory did not silence the conflict. With the nomination of Lou H. Mayer as collector of internal revenue in

<sup>61</sup> Mobile *Daily Register*, August 4, 17, 20, 26, September 6, October 3, 1872.

<sup>62</sup> Jacksonville *Republican*, August 24, 1872.

<sup>63</sup> *Republican Sentinel*, October 31, 1872. Rapier was the editor of the *Sentinel*. *Alabama State Journal*, August 21, 1872.

<sup>64</sup> Union Springs *Herald and Times*, November 6, 1872; *Alabama State Journal*, November 22, 1872; State of Alabama, Secretary of State, Election Returns, 1872, hereafter, Election Returns, ASDAH; Montgomery *Advance*, November 11, 1872;

the first district (Mobile), another dispute arose. "For heaven's sake," one long-time Gulf City resident begged, "[reject him] and appoint someone who belongs to the Conservative wing of the party." Another demanded that "a gentleman of unimpeachable moral character be selected";<sup>65</sup> and ex-slave Jeremiah Haralson objected to "such an ill-considered appointment."<sup>66</sup> Conspiring to prevent Mayer from making bond, the conservatives met strong opposition, as Spencer, Rapier, and Charles Pelham (third district Congressman-elect) extolled Mayer, writing, "I don't know of anybody who can and will do more to re-organize the District than Mayer," and, "I admire his quick perception and his loyalty." They countered the plot to deny Mayer's bond by requesting an extension of the deadline. "It is difficult to make so large a bond in a day or so, for the men of wealth, who are able to go in bonds, usually go north [in the spring]," Rapier argued in a letter to the Treasury Department.<sup>67</sup> In an attempt to harmonize the disparate factions, national Republican spokesman and Revenue Commissioner John W. Douglass dispatched revenue agent James C. Napier to investigate the situation. After two weeks, Napier reported, "I am satisfied that no complaint [concerning Mr. Mayer] would have been

U. S. Attorney John A. Minnis described the 1872 canvass as "the most peaceable and free we have had in Alabama since the war. Democrats professed to accept the situation and made heavy appeals to the negroes to vote for Greeley. [But] failing in this, and failing to carry the state, they [became] enraged." J. A. Minnis, Montgomery, Ala., to George H. Williams, Washington, D. C., September 21, 1874, *Records of the Department of Justice*, Letters Received from United States Attorneys, Middle District of Alabama, R. G. 60, Box 125, National Archives, Washington, D. C., hereafter, *Justice Records*.

<sup>65</sup> Found in: "Report to James C. Napier," in K. R. Kobb, Supervisor of Internal Revenue, Nashville, Tenn., to John W. Douglass, Washington, D. C., August 10, 1874, *Treasury Records*, Internal Revenue, Box 4.

<sup>66</sup> Jeremiah Haralson, Selma, Ala., to D. D. Pratt, Commissioner of Internal Revenue, Washington, D. C., September 8, 1875, in *ibid*.

<sup>67</sup> James Rapier, Montgomery, Ala., to Commissioner of Internal Revenue, April 22, 1873, in *ibid*.; George Spencer and Charles Pelham, Washington, D. C., to Ulysses Grant, Washington, D. C., April 11, 1871, in *ibid*.



made by any friend of the government. I think the only motive of [Haralson and others] is to injure Mr. Mayer, a political enemy."<sup>68</sup> Rather than mollifying the two factions, though, Napier's report only intensified the hostilities.

And as the 1874 election approached, the dispute became even more intense. Republican Frederick Bromberg, opprobriously labeled "a Democrat in disguise and a vile negro hater" by the black press,<sup>69</sup> announced his candidacy for Congress, despite the fact that Jeremiah Haralson, a converted "radical," had already secured the nomination.<sup>70</sup> The political fight that ensued ambiguously aligned pro-Bromberg conservative black Philip Joseph, who favored the pending national civil rights bill, against radical pro-Haralson freedman Allan Alexander, who opposed the legislation. During the campaign the factions fought bitterly, and at times, violently.<sup>71</sup> In Montgomery, Robert Knox, who described himself as "a native Alabamian way down," made a determined effort to defeat the renomination of James Rapier, despite the popularity of the black incumbent among regular Republicans. As editor of the *Weekly Republican*, Knox assailed Rapier "with gloves off," receiving financial as well as moral support from Bingham, Buckley, Rice, and other conservatives. And when the nominating convention met in Union Springs (Bullock County), Knox threatened to break up the meeting in a bloody riot if Rapier refused to sign an oath, pledging support to the conservatives.<sup>72</sup> "I stood all day between angry disputants," Rapier wrote, "sometimes even forcing them to put

<sup>68</sup> "Report of James C. Rapier," *Treasury Records*, Internal Revenue, Box 4.

<sup>69</sup> *New National Era and Citizen*, May 7, 1874.

<sup>70</sup> *Mobile Daily Register*, August 5, 15, 1874; *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, August 21, 1874.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Robert Knox, Montgomery, Ala., to United States Attorney General, March 1, 1871, *Justice Records*; United States Congress, 46th Cong., 2nd sess., *Senate Reports*, Vol. I (1880), xiii; Robert Knox, Montgomery, Ala., to George Boutwell, Secretary of the Treasury, Washington, D. C., June 26, 1891, *Treasury Records*, Customs.

up their deadly weapons. I finally signed the pledge to avert bloodshed."<sup>73</sup> And if these difficulties weren't enough, conservatives drew up five articles of impeachment against Republican judge Richard Busteed, charging bribery, extortion, and improper use of public funds.<sup>74</sup> Though Busteed (who at first had opposed black suffrage but later used the federal courts to disable the KKK) resigned, the impeachment, as well as the acrimonious factional fighting, resulted in a Republican disaster. The November election not only returned the Democracy to power, but also ended the four-year experiment with Reconstruction in Alabama.<sup>75</sup>

In the post-Reconstruction era, though defeated and out of power, the conservatives and moderates continued to fight. The nomination of David P. Lewis for the Busteed judgeship (by Congressman Alexander White) brought a storm of criticism from leading blacks. Selma editor R. A. Mosely, Congressman-elect Jere Haralson, and Rapier, in an interview with President Grant, said: "He [Lewis] will prove another Hughes of Virginia [by] declaring the enforcement acts [which protected black citizenship rights] unconstitutional. With [Lewis] as judge, the colored man in Alabama would be in a worse predicament than [he] was as a slave." Though a compromise candidate (Lewis Parsons) was appointed, the continuing struggle indicated that the downfall of Reconstruction had done little to harmonize the warring factions.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Union Springs *Herald and Times*, August 1, 2, 3, 26, 1874; James Rapier, Montgomery, Ala., to H. H. Craig, Montgomery, Ala., August 27, 1874, printed in the *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, September 4, 1874.

<sup>74</sup> United States Congress, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., *House Reports*, no. 773, "Impeachment of Judge Busteed," June 20, 1874, *ibid.*, *House Miscellaneous Documents*, no. 109, "Articles of Impeachment against the Honorable Richard Busteed, Judge of the District Courts of the United States, Alabama," February 2, 1874, p. 2.

<sup>75</sup> Election Returns for Congress, 1874, ASDAH.

<sup>76</sup> *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, January 3, 1875; *Mobile Daily Register*, January 5, 1875; James Rapier, Charles Hays, George Spencer, Charles Pelham, Washington, D. C., to George F. Edmonds, [December 15, 1874], United States Congress, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., Papers Relating to Nominations by the Senate, Lewis E. Parsons,

And in 1876 they divided into two completely separate parties.<sup>77</sup> Warner, Rice, Haralson, Benjamin Saffold, and ex-Governor Smith, declared the reorganization of the party under conservative leadership; Spencer, Hays, and Rapier announced a state convention of Regulars.<sup>78</sup> In the election campaign that followed (though a single slate of state candidates was agreed upon) the Conservatives backed Haralson and the Regulars supported Rapier in the 4th district (the only solidly Republican district in the state) Congressional race.<sup>79</sup> Republicans stumped the Black Belt in behalf of their respective candidates, and in one speech, Benjamin Saffold told an audience that "Rapier, by his fraudulent and foolish nomination [and] his arrogant conduct in thrusting the race issue into the [1870] canvass," had lost the state for the Republican party.<sup>80</sup> Haralson also received the backing of a number of Democrats. "It is a sad commentary upon these unhappy times that Haralson (negro) should represent the richest district in the state," a Conservative newspaper said, "but our sympathies are with him."<sup>81</sup> And a Democrat in Wilcox County admitted that "some of the most vindictive and bitter democrats in the district support the incumbent."<sup>82</sup> The election typified the plight of the Republican party in Alabama. In a district where blacks outnumbered whites 109,000 to 31,000, and where Republicans had out-voted Conservatives in previous elections three to one, an ex-Confederate general, a third candidate, was elected to Congress.<sup>83</sup>

(43B-A5) , National Archives, Washington, D. C. Lewis soon joined the Democratic party.

<sup>77</sup> *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, May 17, 24, 1876.

<sup>78</sup> *Alabama State Journal*, June 22, 1876, May, *passim*.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>80</sup> United States Congress, 45th Cong., 2nd secs., *Senate Reports*, Vol. I, no. 704 (1877), 540, 541, 704.

<sup>81</sup> *Wilcox Vindicator*, November 1, 1876.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>83</sup> Election Returns, 1876, ASDAH.

Shortly after the campaign the *Alabama State Journal*, the last major Republican newspaper in the state, shut down its presses, but not before lamenting the conflict that had ruined the party. "Our party [has been] disorganized, disrupted, and demoralized. It [has been] rent and torn by internal feuds." And a Conservative newspaper, also commenting on Republican factionalism, said, "Each group hates the other intensely. The principles of the cabals are identical. Only the leadership is different. . . . The first is all 'nigger, and carpet-bagger. The second is largely scalawag."<sup>85</sup> Such an observation, however, was naive; as the principles of the two groups were not identical. The moderates had long demanded the full and complete recognition of the 14th and 15th Amendments, while the conservatives, though professing equal rights for blacks (as indeed had the Democrats), entertained grave doubts about the capacity of freedmen to exercise the rights of free men. Conservative Republican Willard Warner frankly admitted, "If we can attain and shall represent all the political elements, except the Douglass Democrats and colored men, . . . Republicanism will prosper in the South."<sup>86</sup> Nor was the leadership a matter of black-carpetbagger vs. scalawag. The four most powerful conservatives included Warner, a carpetbagger, Haralson, a Negro, and Rice and Smith, scalawags, while their counterparts in the other camp included Pelham and Hays, scalawags, Spencer, a carpetbagger, and Rapiet. In Alabama, different principles had divided the party from the beginning.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> *Alabama State Journal*, June 22, 1876.

<sup>85</sup> *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, July 14, 1876.

<sup>86</sup> Willard Warner, Tecumseh, Ala., to Carl Schurz, Washington, D. C., May 1, 1876, Carl Schurz Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

<sup>87</sup> Sarah Van Woolfolk Wiggins suggests, erroneously I believe, that "personnel, not principles" ruined the party. There were times, of course, when the scramble for office pre-empted devotion to principle (as both she and Cash indicate), but the question of granting full citizenship rights to Negroes was always the dominant, if

Looking back over a decade of warring disputation, one perceptive Republican noted, "After the enfranchisement of [blacks], white Republicans used every means to get up race prejudice. They refused to support or affiliate with colored Republicans [and] in Alabama [the] demoralization of] the Republican party can be traced to that reason. Race prejudice must be whiped out. Justice must be done."<sup>88</sup> Such exclamations, however, fell on deaf ears. In Alabama, at least, the Republican party, the great party of Lincoln, failed to convert the results of the Civil War into a meaningful plan of racial equality, not because of external forces, but mainly because Republicans themselves were in bitter disagreement over the capacity of blacks for citizenship. Indeed, the conflicts that plagued the party throughout its brief existence not only reflected the deep racial prejudices of many whites and even some blacks, but doomed Alabama Reconstruction to failure from the outset.

at times camouflaged, issue. Wiggins, "Role of the Scalawag," 238; Cash, "Alabama Republicans During Reconstruction," *passim*.  
88 B. M. Long, Walker County, Ala., to Chester Arthur, Washington, D. C., n.d., *Treasury Records*, Internal Revenue, Box 2.