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Ramon Jackson: The first question I have is about Reconstruction. A lot of our viewers has no idea what Reconstruction means, could you provide a brief definition of that term for us?

Eric Foner: Reconstruction refers, I think, to two different things. One is it's a specific period of time, usually dated from the end of the Civil War in 1865 to 1877 when African-American men were given the right to vote in the South, new governments were created here, the first interracial democratic governments in Southern or American history really, and the federal government passed laws and constitutional amendments to try to guarantee the basic civil and political rights of the former slaves. Then great and violent opposition arose to this in the South, and these governments were assaulted and often overturned and finally Reconstruction came to an end in 1877, followed later on by the Jim Crow era, segregation, et cetera. That's one - it's a particular time period.

Reconstruction is also, you might say, a historical process. It's the process by which the country as a whole, North and South, tries to come to terms with the results of the Civil War, the reuniting of the nation and the destruction of slavery. That process goes on much longer than 1877. It involves many different kinds of conflicts and developments and it lasts into the twentieth century in many ways. The main point about Reconstruction is it's the era after the Civil War when the country has to come to terms with the consequences of the Civil War and the end of slavery. It's a contentious period. It's a violent period. It's a period of great hope and promise, also of great disappointment, but it is a very, even though not widely known, it's very important to our understanding of America, even today, because you could say it's the first civil rights era. It's the first time the country really tried to bring African Americans as equals into the political system. In a sense, we're still, even

today, wrestling with some of these problems of equality and democracy and citizenship that were first laid out in Reconstruction.

RJ: We're interested in the story of Reconstruction in Georgetown. How familiar are you with that story and could you share some details?

EF: I'm not really specifically familiar with Georgetown. I know a lot about South Carolina and other parts, but I think the point is really, Georgetown was, of course, is on the coast. It was part of the rice kingdom of that time. Some of the richest Americans, North or South, lived in coastal South Carolina from Georgetown on down the coast toward Beaufort and everything. Rice was a particularly unusual crop in that the slaves had a great deal of autonomy in labor. They didn't have overseers, they worked on their own in different tasks each day. Often they could finish their work and do work on their own for part of the time. These areas like Georgetown were overwhelmingly black. The population was a tremendous black-to-white ratio and therefore, once African-American men got the right to vote, it was inevitable that many African-American officials would be elected both to Congress, Joseph Rainey, to the state legislature, the constitutional convention, local office.

Georgetown was a center of black political activism in Reconstruction as were a good number of other parts of South Carolina because South Carolina was the state with the largest African-American percentage of its population, heading along towards 60% of the population at that time. You had many districts where black people could and did elect African-Americans to office. Georgetown Reconstruction is a microcosm, I'd say, of the largest story of Reconstruction in the state of South Carolina where African Americans really enjoyed a ... They didn't control all politics. The Governor was always white in this period, but they had a very great degree of political influence for the first time in American history, and then once Reconstruction ended, it would take a long, long time for that degree of political power to resume, if it ever did.

RJ: Can you talk a little bit about the Freedmen's Bureau and the labor contracts?

EF: Part of the problem of Reconstruction is what you might call the transition from slave labor to free labor. Slavery was a total system, that is, it was a system of labor, of politics, of race relations, of family relations. The destruction of slavery meant all those things were up in the air. What was going to replace slavery? Slavery is fundamentally a system of labor, though, and what kind of labor system would replace slave labor? The Freedmen's Bureau is an agency created by the federal government in March 1865 to oversee this transition. It had innumerable tasks, set up its own court system to make sure that blacks got fair treatment in courts. It set up schools. It set up hospitals. They tried to provide aid to both black and white impoverished people in the aftermath of the war.

A good part of its work was this labor thing, trying to implement what they would consider a free labor system in the South to replace slave labor. Now, free labor meant people would have a choice of where they worked, they couldn't be whipped, they couldn't have physical coercion. On the other hand, once they signed a contract they had to do the work, they couldn't leave. It was very complicated. Black people basically wanted land of their own, the famous 40 acres and a mule. They didn't want to work for white people anymore, they wanted economic autonomy. Whites wanted blacks back to work in a situation as close to slavery as possible with discipline and white control over the labor process and so that was an inevitable recipe for conflict of one kind or another.

Now, in the rice area along the coast and including the Georgetown area, it's a little more complicated because, as I mentioned before, slaves there actually enjoyed a great deal of autonomy in their labor. They didn't work in gangs like in cotton plantations, they worked in the so called task system and there were no white overseers. They basically ran these rice areas by themselves and had a lot of leeway into when they worked, how much they worked, et cetera. In the rice area, the labor system pretty much continued intact because blacks wanted to work with that kind of autonomy. Once they couldn't get land, once the Federal Government said we're not distributing land, the task system gave them a lot of autonomy. Some of these big plantations fell to pieces after the war, and so blacks could get little pieces of land for themselves. In the coast of South Carolina, including

Georgetown, I think you had more African Americans who acquired land in the 20 years, let's say, after the Civil War than in many other parts of the South.

You did have a much greater degree of economic autonomy there and in the Sea Islands and some other places than in most other parts of the cotton or tobacco South. In the cotton areas it was usually sharecropping that basically took over eventually, where the black families would sign a contract with the landowner. Basically they're renting a piece of land for the year. They have autonomy in the sense they don't have day to day supervision of their labor, like under slavery, but on the other hand they have to grow cotton, they often have to borrow money from the planter or from merchants, they fall into debt very easily and at the end of the year the crop is divided up. Sharecropping, the owner gets some, the laborer gets some.

There's a lot of controversy each time about how fair it is, how much fraud there is, what interest rates, but the main point is sharecropping is not a route to autonomy. It's not a route toward social mobility. It becomes a trap for large numbers of black ... By the way, white families, many white sharecropping families are also in existence in the South. In the rice areas it's a little different. The blacks do get land eventually, many of them, and they do work with greater autonomy, which gives them more political autonomy too. Nobody can use their economic control over them to force them into some political mold or other.

RJ: Earlier you mentioned in your talk that the 15th amendment was a negative amendment. I guess my question is, were there restrictions on what type of African-American man could vote once it was passed or was this universal?

EF: No. Immediately after the Civil War, the first Reconstruction government that was set up, including in South Carolina, didn't let blacks vote at all, it was only whites could vote. Andrew Johnson, the president who succeeded Lincoln, set these up and they were all just white government. Blacks had no voice whatsoever. For complicated reasons, Congress got fed up with Andrew Johnson's policies because they were giving the Freedmen no rights whatsoever, civil rights, political rights and in 1867, they passed the Reconstruction

Act which enfranchised black men, all black men, and they could vote, and so new governance came into existence in South Carolina in 1868 and in the other Southern states.

The 15th Amendment comes a little after that. It's ratified in 1870 and it applies to the whole country. The Reconstruction Act only applied to the Confederate South. By 1870, black men can vote anywhere in the country, and without any other qualification basically. In other words, later on you'll get things like poll taxes, literacy tests, but at this point, no, you don't have them. Whites also can vote on the same basis. You have a functioning interracial democracy in Reconstruction. Black men vote. White men vote. In the Georgetown area, there's a very large black majority, so you get a lot of blacks elected. All Republicans, the Republican party comes to power in South Carolina at the state level, at the local level. This is a radical transformation. There had never been a Republican party in South Carolina before the Civil War, and of course blacks had had no rights, basically, before the Civil War, and suddenly they're exercising a significant degree of political power and that alarms a lot of defenders of the old way.

RJ: How did the federal government implement the process of returning land to the planter families, because I notice they reappear in the late 1860s. How did that process unfold?

EF: At the end of the Civil War there was a significant amount of land in the hands of the federal government, abandoned land where the planters had just fled, some confiscated land, land that General Sherman had assigned to black families in 1865. Along the coast of South Carolina, the Freedmen's Bureau had some land and African Americans hoped that this would be distributed to them. The famous phrase 40 acres and a mule, they wanted these small farms, but President Andrew Johnson, who had no sympathy whatsoever for the aspirations of the former slaves, basically ordered all this land returned to the former owners. In South Carolina, blacks who had been settled on land by General Sherman are then evicted by 1866, sometimes by the Army. The very Army that's liberated them, now comes back and says, "Look, your owner is coming back, you've either got to work for him

or leave. This is no longer your land." This led to a great deal of disappointment.

When a new government is set up in South Carolina in 1868, they do set up what they call a State Land Commission and the purpose of that is to purchase land on the open market. Values are very low at that time, and they don't give it, but sell it, but on very easy, long terms, to both black and white families. By the end of Reconstruction, 1877, something like 10% of the black families in South Carolina have gotten land through the State Land Commission. Now, 10% is not a lot, but it's more than there used to be. Unfortunately, after the so-called Redeemers, or the White Supremacists, come back in, a lot of that land is lost again because people can't pay their mortgage or their debt and the land is confiscated. Again, in the rice area in particular, many of the planters just can't resume work.

Rice fields require a tremendous amount of investment for hydraulic systems, for dams, for irrigation and a lot of these places were destroyed or damaged in the Civil War and a lot of these guys just could not get the capital together to get the rice going, and so in those areas they did sell little pieces of land to black farmers, but overall in the South, very few African Americans managed to get land in the years after the Civil War.

RJ: One of the patterns we've also noticed is the emergence of a middle class of whites, mill owners during the Antebellum period. They start purchasing the land of the planter elites after the war. How did that process contribute to this idea of Reconstruction as chaotic?

EF: The fact is that when the Civil War ended the South was bankrupt. Confederate money had no value anymore. Confederate bonds had no value anymore. If you had loaned money to the Confederate Government, that money is gone, you can't get it back. The 14th amendment says that no one can pay back loans to the Confederate Government. Banks are all destroyed, many planters who had patriotically loaned money to the Confederate Government, they lose all that money. They still have their land, but they don't have labor anymore and they don't have money. That's why in the cotton area, sharecropping develops, because it doesn't require cash payments until the end of the year.

In the rice area, many planters just could not get going so they will sell land, not only to former slaves, but to these middle class whites. By the way, in cotton areas it happens too. Local merchants begin to buy up land from destitute planters and so you get a merger of the merchant class and the planter class. Now, this takes place over 20 or 30 years and, in fact, it's just beginning during Reconstruction, but by the 1880s and '90s, as Vann Woodward explained in his book, *Origins of the New South*, the new South is not just the old South brought back, it's got a different configuration. Rural merchants, millers are much more important in the economy than they were before the Civil War. Planters are important, but they've lost a lot of their power, many times have to borrow money from merchants in order to get back going. It's a different configuration, but the fact is, almost all of those people with economic power are white and it became very hard for blacks to move very far up in the economic scale.

RJ: You mentioned that there was a pretty sizable contingent of African-American residents in Georgetown and the rice coast that were able to participate in politics. Can you talk about about the internal divisions within the black community during this period and how that might have impacted the direction of the party locally or statewide?

EF: I'd say there were two key divisions among African Americans here. One was between those who were free before the war and those who were slaves. South Carolina did have a small but important free black community, mostly in cities like in Charleston, some in Georgetown, not so many in the upcountry. These were often the offspring of planters. In South Carolina, which had originated as an offshoot of the West Indies, Barbados, there was more of a tendency to recognize the children. You had more of a three-race system, black slaves, this mixed race class of free people and then the whites. In much of the rest of the South that middle group doesn't exist - you've just got black and white, and even the children of planters are just slaves.

Here you get planters who will often assist their mixed race children in setting up a business, getting a little bit of education and sometimes even sending them abroad for

education. That group is lighter in skin color than the slaves, basically, and also sets itself apart. In Charleston, they had something called the Brown Fellowship Society, which wouldn't admit dark skinned people. That's a free organization. Those people tended to take the lead in Reconstruction, at least in the beginning. They were highly educated. They were politically organized. They were well positioned to move forward once political rights came to African Americans. Former slaves take a little longer, but they do, and they assert themselves. Sometimes there is tension because the free group is much more tied into the white elite than the former slaves are, so there are differences of opinion about policy.

Then, similar but not the same, you might say, is a class division between your ordinary rural former slave, very poor coming out of slavery, and a more middle class black group, some of them, many of them formerly free, but some of them are slaves also, or former slaves who managed to start a business or something and get some money, so you have a difference there. To the ordinary former slave, the land issue is the key thing. They want political rights. They want social rights, but land is number one. To the middle class blacks, land is not so much important because they're city people by and large, and more important to them are issues of social rights, political rights, the right to travel on transportation, the right to go into a theatre or a restaurant without discrimination.

Most former slaves aren't going to any restaurants anyway. These are tensions, I wouldn't say they're outright conflict. After all, the number of free blacks is small and eventually it's former slaves that really take over black politics. There are these tensions in which kind of emphasis there should be. Then, by the way, there's another group, which is free Northern blacks who come down to the South during Reconstruction, so called black carpetbaggers. South Carolina attracts a good number of them. They tend to be more like the free blacks. They are free from before the Civil War and they, again, are educated and talented and they move into positions of political power. That's another group whose interests are not always exactly the same as your ordinary former slave.

EF: We've seen evidence of that in some of our research. There was a speech given by a fellow named W.H. Jones who was a former field hand who became a political figure

within the Republican party. He gives this really fiery address on the steps of Joseph Rainey's home, refers to him as an enemy of the race. Could you talk a little bit about a person like Joseph Rainey who's "from off" coming back to lead this radical faction?

Eric: Rainey is an interesting guy. He was born a slave, but then he becomes free when his father manages to purchase the freedom of the family, so he had been free basically before the Civil War. I believe he'd been in the North for a while and then he comes back during the war or even before the war. He was there when the Civil War takes place in Charleston. He escapes, if I'm not mistaken, during the war, to Bermuda. Then he comes back, sets himself up as a barber in Georgetown, so he really represents this middle class, former free, lighter skinned black. Elite maybe too strong, because compared to the white elite, they're not rich like those guys, but he certainly is better off than most former slaves. He's more of an accommodationist. Again, he wants rights for black Americans but he's not confrontational with the whites.

He becomes the first black member of Congress when he takes a seat in the House of Representatives in 1870. He was the first black member of Congress. I don't know that speech you mentioned, particularly, but I can see why some more militant blacks might consider Rainey more accommodationist. This kind of division exists all throughout African-American history whether it's Martin Luther King and Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey and DuBois. I'm over simplifying, but there's always a tension about what is the proper strategy, is it militants, is it accommodation, is it integration, is it separatism, nationalism? One important point is simply obvious - black people are no more all the same than white people are, and there are divisions among them. There's no reason to think they should all think the same on everything, and those divisions were visible in Reconstruction just like at any other time period.

RJ: Could you discuss the emergence of the early Ku Klux Klan? And then a follow up question to that would be, why would someone like Simon Baruch, Bernard Baruch's father

who's a Jewish doctor, a former Confederate surgeon, why would someone like him join an organization like the Klan?

EF: The Klan emerges in the later 1860s. There was violence in the South right after the Civil War, but more sporadic, individual violence of individual planters against former slaves. There's a lot of conflict about who owns land and what the rights of people are, but it's not organized particularly. The Klan emerges 1867, '68, originally as a reaction against the political empowerment of African Americans. Just about every white person in South Carolina, I'm sorry to say, is opposed to the political empowerment of black people. In some states in Reconstruction there's a significant class of what they call scalawags. That is a term of abuse, but it kind of has become part of the vocabulary. Scalawag, Southern born white Republicans. In North Carolina, in Georgia, other places, there's a significant number, the hill country people, people in the mountains, not the plantation owners, poorer whites who are not loyal to the plantation owners, but South Carolina doesn't really have a region like that, doesn't have a big mountainous region like North Carolina does, like Georgia has.

Somebody who wrote a book on scalawags in South Carolina, he could only find a couple of hundred of them in the whole state, so you don't have any white people really, except for a very few, willing to identify with, to join up with the Republicans on these interracial governments. That's why a lot of the white leaders in South Carolina are actually what they call carpetbaggers, Northern whites, who are down here. They are willing to do it. A guy like Baruch is no different than any other white guy in South Carolina. They are opposed to black political rights. They are opposed to Reconstruction. They think that blacks are now running the state and this is a terrible thing and they're willing to join an organization that will fight that.

Now, the Klan is a terrorist organization. There's no other way of putting it. It's like an American Al Qaeda. In fact, I would say in the South as a whole, the Klan and groups like it probably killed more Americans during Reconstruction than Al Qaeda has killed. We have homegrown American terrorism in our history, not just terrorism from abroad. In South Carolina, it's mostly in the upcountry. The Klan is not that active in the coastal areas, for

obvious reasons. Where blacks are 80% of the population, it's going to be difficult for white people to get dressed up and go riding around and terrorizing them. It's more in these counties in the middle part of the state or the upcountry where whites are either about half of the population or the majority, and then intimidating blacks violently can be done more readily by them.

Certainly the Klan comes out and they commit a lot of very heinous crimes of murder, of arson, of whipping of people to try to undermine Reconstruction, to try to intimidate black voters, to try to intimidate black officeholders. A member of Congress is assassinated here, Benjamin Randolph in South Carolina, in 1868. It's a very violent time. Now, in 1871, President Grant sends the troops in and crushes the Klan. You can do it if you're willing to play rough with them, which he is, and the Klan disappears in 1871-72. Later on other kind of violence develops later on in Reconstruction. A lot of the members of the Klan were very respectable people, they were people like Baruch. They were planters. They were doctors. They were lawyers. They were ministers. If you read the Klan hearings, Congress set up these hearings which are published where they interviewed people.

We think of the Klan from the 1920s with their white outfits. That's not the Klan of Reconstruction. They didn't go around in these outfits. Some of them had disguises, some didn't, but people knew who they were. There was no secret. People who testified always said, "Oh, I recognize so and so. The guys who came and whipped me, he was a local lawyer. I knew who these guys were." They weren't hiding out and they were respectable people, so one shouldn't be surprised. They were just committed to white supremacy and they wanted to restore it by any means necessary.

RJ: Talk a little bit more about the differences between this first incarnation of the Klan and say the 1920s version?

EF: The Klan comes back right after World War I. The 20s Klan is very different. First of all, it's located more in the North than in the South. It goes around in those white robes. It's racist of course, but it devotes a lot of its time against Catholics, against Jews, it's more equal opportunity racist. It's more a reaction to the changes of American life of that

time, the cultural changes. They're opposed to women's rights. They're for prohibition and they go after people who are violating that. It's part of the cultural war of the 1920s between modernity and tradition and between native-born Americans and immigrants.

A lot of their hostility is toward Jewish and Catholic immigrants, so it's not to say they're not racist against blacks, but a lot of their activity is in the North where it's not blacks who are their targets at all, it's other groups. In fact, in the South you don't need the Klan anymore because by the 1920s the South is firmly in the Jim Crow era and you don't need the Klan to go out terrorizing black people because the system is kind of set by that point.

RJ: Fusion politics - can you define that for our viewers and then address the question, why would African Americans in Georgetown after the return of Wade Hampton in 1876 agree to this type of political process?

EF: As the 1870s goes on Northerners begin to retreat from Reconstruction and it becomes more and more difficult for the federal government to intervene, to assist, or to protect the rights of former slaves. In many states, Reconstruction has been overthrown by the early to mid 1870s. In South Carolina there were some blacks who say, "Look, the handwriting is on the wall. Reconstruction is going to come to an end, fusion politics is basically making a deal with more forward looking whites in the Democratic party. This racially polarized politics is not going to succeed. The north is tiring of this. The Democrats are going to get back into control and we should make a deal with the better part of the Democratic party to prevent the really racist and violent part from taking over."

In 1876, Wade Hampton, former General in the Confederacy, runs for Governor and he promises, he said, "Look, I am not against black people. I promise to respect all their rights. I don't like the Reconstruction governments, but blacks rights will be perfectly safe under me." Beneath that though, there is also a campaign of violence against blacks by the so-called Red Shirts. Hampton says, "Oh, I don't have anything to do with that," but these Red Shirts are going around terrorizing people, particularly in the upcountry, to prevent them from voting. The Hamburg massacre takes place in the summer of 1876 and

eventually Hampton is elected. It's a very complicated election. It's a disputed election, but as part of the general bargain of 1877 which ends Reconstruction, Hampton comes in as Governor of South Carolina.

There were those blacks who say, "We've got to work with him, we've got no alternative now. We're never going to get a pure Republican government back in here." There are all these violent factions. Hampton seems like a guy who will work, at least, with some degree of fairness. That's what fusion politics involves, sort of working with the Democrats and maybe ceding to them many of the offices. Republicans accepting that on the condition that the Republicans get some offices for themselves. That works for a while, particularly in South Carolina, where you have a significant large black voting block. Hampton then goes off to the Senate, I think. He's not Governor all that long and some of his successors are not nearly as willing to do that as Hampton is.

Then by the 1890s you get the rise of an entire different group, the Ben Tillmans, the pure and utter racists who just want to get blacks out of the picture all together. This is a white supremacist state and we're not giving blacks any rights, and so fusion politics falls apart at that point. There is a period, certainly in the 1880s, where in a lot of areas you get these alliances between some Democrats and some Republicans to divvy up the state or local offices and both groups accept that.

RJ: You mentioned that Georgetown's sizable black population allowed them to maintain power politically for longer than most other places. Can you provide an example of that, either in Georgetown or Beaufort?

EF: I know more about Beaufort than Georgetown. In Beaufort you have Robert Smalls, of course, as the political boss of Beaufort and member of Congress, member of the legislature, member of the State Constitutional Convention and also a Collector of Customs, a very important federal position. He runs a political machine here which dominates Beaufort politics for a long time. Beaufort's another area of this region with a very large black voting majority. As I say, they're sending blacks to Congress in the 1880s, even in the

1890s, Smalls. There are these enclaves of black political power that survive the end of Reconstruction, but there aren't a hell of a lot of them. There are some in some other states, some parts of Mississippi, some parts of Louisiana where there's a really large black population and they can still retain local control of local office and maybe elect a guy to their legislature, but what can he do? There may be five blacks on the legislature and 75 whites, so the fact that people can be elected from Beaufort doesn't really help very much in the larger scheme of things. At the local level, the local control does survive the end of Reconstruction for a good while.

RJ: Let's talk a little bit about the 1895 Constitutional Convention here in South Carolina. What were some of the goals of that convention for the Tillmanites, and can you think of any efforts to resist these goals?

EF: By 1895, the purpose of the Constitutional Convention was to take the right to vote away from black men. In 1868, a new constitution had come in in South Carolina which was one of the most Democratic-forward constitutions in the country. 1895, by this point, many states, starting in Mississippi, have already taken the right to vote away from blacks, and the Tillmanites, who were in control of politics, that's the purpose of the convention. Now, Robert Smalls was elected to that convention. I think there was only five or six black delegates in the whole convention, but some of them are from down in the coastal area. Smalls is there, he and Thomas Miller maybe, give speeches condemning the disenfranchisement. In other words, they will pass all these restrictions on voting. They can't be explicitly racial because the 15th amendment says, "You can't deny a person the right to vote because of race," but you can have all these other qualifications, poll taxes, literacy tests, understanding clauses and other things and the way they're administered just eliminates black people from voting.

Yes, there was vocal opposition from the handful of black delegates. In other words, black voting was not very prevalent in the state because only a handful got elected, but there was always the specter of black voting. By the way, the 1890s is the period of the

populist movement throughout the South and the planters and others always feared that rebellious whites like the populists would line up with blacks. In other words, if you're trying to challenge the hegemony of the Democratic party, you've got to look to the black vote. That's the only other block of votes that you could appeal to. As long as the black vote is a possibility, the people in charge are nervous. Then the Tillmanites, who aren't exactly planters necessarily, but they just want white supremacy altogether. They hate blacks and they want to keep them out completely.

Those groups, the utter racists and the planters and merchants who were afraid of a populist upsurge will combine in order to eliminate the black vote. Once you eliminate the black vote, whites can fight it out among themselves without worrying that the loser is then going to go and try to get black people to vote for him. After 1895 and the black vote is basically eliminated, you get a new kind of politics, which is more the rise of the demagogue, like Tillman, the racial demagogue who wins by just appealing to overt racism among white voters and also a little bit of populism. They have the vote of the common white man, although they were always in league with the big planters. They never do anything against them, but their campaigns are all that they're the common man.

1895 is a very important date in South Carolina history because it really is the full advent of what we call the Jim Crow system, which includes segregation, it includes disenfranchisement, it includes devastating black education, and of course it includes lynching on the edges. People who challenge it are liable to extra legal violence, and there are quite a few lynchings in South Carolina from 1890 to 1950.

RJ: How might that kind of widespread violence have impacted the political sphere in a place like Georgetown?

EF: I think the purpose of that kind of violence was to intimidate people and make them frightened, and it was directed not only against politics, but against anybody who challenged the system, a guy who disputes the division of the crop at the end of the year, or a guy who tries to register to vote after 1895, or other things. Anyone who steps outside

the system could be punished by lynching. I think what happens, after 1900, the options for black politics anywhere in the state are very, very limited. The only avenue after that is federal patronage, basically. As long as the Republican party is in power in Washington, there's still going to be some black people appointed to federal offices. It could be the postmaster in various places. It could be the customs collector like down here.

There are a lot of federal patronage jobs and the Republicans appoint Republicans who are often black, but those have no real power in the state. They're a way of making a living for black political leaders, but they're not state offices where they can have any real effect on public policy. I would say, after 1900, the political options are very, very limited for African Americans in state politics and local politics.

RJ: It's interesting that you bring up this idea of patronage. One of the more well-known mentioned stories in the Georgetown county area was Frazier Baker who was murdered in 1898. He was the postmaster in Lake City. They couldn't get rid of him so they lynched him.

EF: Right. Yeah, lynching a federal appointee is something that's a little bit dangerous. The federal government might respond to that. I don't know what they did in that case, but I don't think you can do that too often. Lynching a guy who was on the plantation or even a local justice of the peace is one thing. The federal government is not going to approve of its appointees getting murdered in the streets. There was always the fear, even though by this time it's pretty much gone, that the federal government would intervene again. They had done it in Reconstruction. There were those Republicans who said, "This is ridiculous what's going on in the South, forget about racial equality, they're taking away Republican votes. We're a party, we can't let them just negate thousands and thousands of our voters. We've got to get in there and enforce the law." Didn't happen, but there's always the fear it might. I wouldn't imagine there were too many federal appointees who were lynched in South Carolina or other states.

RJ: Why do you feel the topic of Reconstruction has been either overlooked or forgotten by historians in Georgetown and these small rural areas in South Carolina?

EF: I think there's a lot of reasons why people don't know as much about Reconstruction as they ought to. First of all, as somebody said, Americans like a tragedy with a happy ending and Reconstruction doesn't have a happy ending unless you're a total white supremacist and you approve of the overthrow of political democracy in this country, but that may not be something we want to really celebrate. For many years, Reconstruction was enshrouded in myth and misconception. The dominant view of it was a period of corruption and misgovernment, and that blacks were running amuck, and it proved that they can't take part in government. That's been overturned and historians have long since repudiated that view, but still it's out there in popular sentiment, in popular memory. It's hard to get people to think about it another way.

It's overshadowed by the Civil War, of course. It's not taught very much in school. If you're teaching American History, let's say a year of American History, you probably end the first term with the Civil War. It's impossible to get to Reconstruction, also. If you're trying to start with Reconstruction in the second half you don't spend much time on it because you've got the whole of the twentieth century and everything you've got to get through and go through, so it gets lost in the shuffle somehow of teaching American History. Then, it does raise big issues about race, about democracy, about American freedom, and why people have been deprived of it. It's distasteful to many ... It forces us to face the fact that we have failed as a country in some ways, to guarantee the basic rights of a lot of our own people and that's not a picture of American History that is likely to generate a lot of enthusiasm among a lot of people.

To me, Reconstruction is an inspiring story. It's a story of people coming out of slavery with tremendous disadvantages actually mobilizing themselves to get greater rights and to change this into a real democracy and to get economic opportunity for themselves and education. I think the struggle itself is inspiring, even though in many ways

it didn't succeed. Now it didn't fail completely. Some of the institutions created churches and schools and continued, well, forever, but certainly the idea of political democracy failed after the end of Reconstruction. It is important for people to know about because it is the first civil rights era of American History, and you can't understand the second civil rights era and you can't understand where we're at today without knowing the origins in Reconstruction.

RJ: In what ways is South Carolina still grappling with the ghost of the 1895 Constitutional Convention?

EF: I don't want to speak ill of South Carolina. I have many friends here and I'm always treated with consummate hospitality when I come here, but as you know, South Carolina has a peculiar history. It was the state with the largest slave population in terms of its overall population. It was the state with the largest percentage of white population owning slaves. It was the state that nullified the tariff. It was the first state to secede. White supremacy is in the DNA of this state, or was for a long, long time. Reconstruction was a gigantic exception to that and it generated violent opposition as we said, and then it was followed by 1895 and by a long, long period of deep inequality, segregation, disenfranchisement, et cetera, et cetera.

Now, we're not prisoners of the past and people today may have very different views of what is correct than they did in 1900, let us say, I hope they do, but still, I don't think the state has really faced up to the consequences of its own history and to the legacy of these inequalities built into the history of South Carolina. Maybe there is nowadays more of a willingness to do that, given the tragedy that happened in Charleston, given the taking down of the Confederate flag at the State House, given the discourse that has taken place since then. It's hard. It's hard for people to confront some of the errors or crimes of their past. I'm not just singling out South Carolina. This country itself has never come to terms with slavery and the implications of hundreds of years of slavery for what America is.

There is no museum of the history of slavery in this country. That's an astonishing

fact. We have a museum in Washington DC of the Holocaust as we should, an important thing; no museum of slavery. What would we think if in Berlin they had a big museum of American slavery and nothing about the Holocaust. We would say that they're trying to avoid something there. Coming to terms with your history, even if it's not totally rose colored, I think, is an important thing for people to fully understand how our society got to the point it is today.

RJ: From about 1880 until Baruch's arrival in 1905 and several decades beyond that, we saw a great trend of northern industrialists and business leaders coming down and purchasing many of these old plantations, using them as hunting retreats, and they would host political figures, celebrities and the likes during the winter months. In what ways were these meetings evidence of this idea of reunion and regeneration during the aftermath of Reconstruction?

EF: That's a good question, because I think what David Blight talked about in his book about reunion and the consequences of it, the way in which elites, North and South, come back together in the 1880s and '90s after Reconstruction, a lot of Northern investment by that point in Southern railroads and other things, steel down in Birmingham, lumber companies, and the creation of tourist resorts in Florida around this time for Northerners and then the purchase of these large estates in the South Carolina coast where Northerners would be feted a lot, I think it's a symbol or part of this general reunion and part of that was forgetting the rights of black people. This was a white reunion, white North, white South, with pushing to the side the slavery issue, the Reconstruction issue, the whole question of the rights of African Americans. I think even though we've been talking about the South, about 1895, about disenfranchisement, none of this could have happened without the acquiescence of the North.

You're talking about the violation or the abrogation of parts of the U.S. Constitution in the South, the 14th and 15th amendments, but the Supreme Court gave the go ahead to that and that's a Northern Supreme Court. Northern politicians gave the go ahead. Without

Northern approval, the Southern system could not have been put into place, could not have been solidified, and it's part of the general resurgence of racism in the world in the late nineteenth century. Remember there's the period of the dividing up of Africa by European powers. It's a period of race as a dominant element of public thought, whether in science, in history, in sociology. Race and the supposed inferiority and superiority of different races in relation to each other is a building block of knowledge at that period.

The suppression of African-American rights is part of a much bigger process that the North is involved in, that other countries are involved in. In a way, the entertainment of Northern elites down here in the Georgetown area is one little piece of that larger picture of reconciliation of white North and white South, but the cost of that is the rights of African Americans.

RJ: I imagine there are some economic costs as well. Many of the Hobcaw dwellings had no electricity, no plumbing, there's very little resources.

EF: The thing is, there's a tremendous cost to the South itself. The South becomes the poorest part of the country from the richest. Before the Civil War the richest people in the country were big planters in the South, but in the years after the Civil War into the twentieth century, the South is the poorest region. It does not share in the tremendous economic development that's going on in the North, the industrialism, railroad construction, factories. Gigantic economic growth is taking place in the North, but it is not shared in the South. The South falls further and further behind economically. Now, this affects everybody in the South, but as the people at the bottom of the ladder in the poorest region blacks suffer the most, although plenty of whites suffer also.

When Northerners do invest in the South it's as a colonial thing, they're extracting resources, lumber, mining resources, or vacation tourism, but they're not investing for productive purposes which will uplift the Southern economy. The South is a cheap labor region. When they do try to get Northern investment it's on the basis of cheap labor, no unions. Blacks are basically kept out of some of the economic development that does take

place like the textile factories in the Piedmont. The new South is a very forlorn region economically and it remains that way. In the new deal, President Roosevelt says, "The South is the nation's number one economic problem." It has never really recuperated from the Civil War and it's partly because of this racial system, which destroys black education. A large part of the population is being kept in an artificially subordinate position and that can't help but affect the economy of the whole region.

RJ: Lastly, you're here for the NEH conference on Reconstruction, it's kind of this opening salvo to reclaim and bring back some of this history to the public consciousness, so in a decade let's say, where would you like to see that process?

EF: I would hope, and I'm not a South Carolinian, but I have many friends here, and I would hope that in a decade there would be much greater recognition in the public memory of South Carolina of the accomplishments of Reconstruction and some of the leaders of Reconstruction. I'd like to see exhibits, little centers in places like Georgetown, Beaufort, but also in the upcountry, Columbia, other places, of places where African-American leaders took a major part in pol- ... I'd like to see statues of some of the black leaders of Reconstruction. We've got plenty of statues of Confederate leaders all over the place. I don't say take down those, I say put up more. Make the public display of history more inclusive of the real history of the state, not just one piece of the history of the state.

People forget that when the Civil War began, the majority of the people of this state were slaves. They were not Confederates. The slaves wanted the Union to win, not the Confederacy, they wanted their freedom. The Confederate monuments all over the place do not actually represent the majority of the population of South Carolina from that time, but you have to then accept that the black people are also part of this history, and so far that hasn't been accepted very much in the public display of history. I hope that now that we're in the 150th anniversary of Reconstruction, times have changed, ideas have changed. I'd like to see Reconstruction integrated into the public memory of the state instead of ignored and avoided like it has been up to this point.

End of Interview