

**From The Perspective of White Southerners, What were the Stated Purposes and Goals of
the Black Codes?**

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Black codes were first enacted in Mississippi and South Carolina in 1865. After slavery was abolished, black codes were laws made to limit the freedom of the African Americans. Black codes were designed to make certain that African Americans were able to enter the cheap labor force.

It all started when Vice President Andrew Johnson became president after President Abraham Lincoln was shot by John Wilkes Booth on April 15, 1865. During this time, congress was adjourned until December allowing time for President Johnson to execute a plan of reconstruction without the input from congress. Congress was not happy when they returned in December to find that President Johnson had executed reconstruction with two little demands of the ex-rebels. They felt as though this would help the Old South to reunify. At this time the Republicans worked hard to end President Johnson's plan and make one of their own.

Johnson was raised Democrat and yet elected to the White House because the Republican party was in need of a vice president to appeal the union supported Democrats. Johnson opposed the efforts by the Republicans to expand the power of the federal government. He was a supporter of slavery and owned slaves until the Tennessee rebels seized them because of being angry with him. Johnson stated that Africans were "inferior to the white man in point of intellect-better calculated in physical structure to undergo drudgery and hardship" (Roark, 2019 pg.463).

White southerners had resistance to black codes. They had drawn up new state constitutions and would not accept any of Johnson's requirements. The new state governments adopted these black codes that would deny any blacks their rights of equality. Many of the states

made it illegal for blacks to own a gun, serve jury duty, or be able to vote. Mississippi took it even a step further and made it a criminal offense towards blacks if they made insulting gestures.

South Carolina would charge a tax of \$10 to \$100 dollars if any black worked another occupation other than working on plantations. Mississippi made it so that blacks would have to have written proof of employment. If they could not show this, they were to be considered transient and put into plantation work. The state government would confiscate the poor black children and orphans and put them to work for planters. President Johnson did not try to put a stop to this, in fact he believed that the white men should run the south.

Resources

Roark, J. (2019). Chapter 16. In *AMERICAN PROMISE: A concise history* (pp. 462-464). Place of publication not identified: BEDFORD BKS ST MARTIN'S.