

# The Mississippi Black Code (1865)

## 1. CIVIL RIGHTS OF FREEDMEN IN MISSISSIPPI

Sec.1. *Be it enacted*,... That all freedmen, free negroes, and mulattoes may sue and be sued, in all the courts of law and equity of this State, and may acquire personal property.

Sec. 3....All freedmen, free negroes, or mulattoes who do now and have here before lived together as husband and wife shall be held in law as legally married. It shall not be lawful for any freedman, free negro, or mulatto to intermarry with any white person; nor for any white person to intermarry with any freedman, free negro, or mulatto; and any person who shall so intermarry, shall be deemed guilty of felony, and shall be confined in the State penitentiary for life;

Sec. 3. Be it further enacted That every freeman, free negro and mulatto, shall, on the second Monday of January, 1866, and annually thereafter, have lawful employment, and shall have written evidence thereof . . .

Sec. 6....All contracts for labor made with freedmen, free negroes, and shall be in writing; if the laborer shall quit the service of the employer before the expiration of his term of service, without good cause, he shall forfeit his wages for that year up to the time of quitting.

Sec. 7....Every police officer shall, and every person may, arrest and carry back to his or her legal employer any freedman, free negro, or mulatto who shall have quit the service of his or her employer before the expiration of his or her term of service without good cause;

## 2. MISSISSIPPI APPRENTICE LAW

Any freedmen, free negroes, or mulattoes, under the age of eighteen whose parent or parents have not the means, shall, at the order of a court, be apprenticed to a competent and suitable person. Any apprentice who shall leave employment of his master, without his consent, may be pursued by said master and recaptured. . . .

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### Document Analysis

1. What privileges did freedmen gain in the Black Codes? Did they lose any rights? Explain.
2. Why do you think southern states passed these laws right after the Civil War and passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment?
3. Many have compared these laws to slavery. Is that a fair comparison?