

---

### ***Black Senator from Mississippi***

After 1876, because of the violence and fraud used against Republican voters, only one black Mississippian remained in Congress. He was Blanche K. Bruce.

Born a slave in Virginia, Bruce was taught to read and write by his master's son. During the Civil War he made his way to Missouri and became a teacher. After attending Oberlin College, he moved to Mississippi. He bought land for a plantation in Bolivar County and was elected tax assessor, sheriff, and later county superintendent of schools.

In 1874 the Mississippi Legislature elected him to the United States Senate, joining James L. Alcorn. Bruce later recalled the scene:

When I came up to the Senate I knew no one except Senator Alcorn, who was my colleague. When the names of the new Senators were called out for them to go up and take the oath, all the others except myself were escorted by their colleagues. Mr. Alcorn made no motion to escort me, but was buried behind a newspaper, and I concluded I would go it alone. I had got about half way up the aisle when a tall gentleman stepped up to me and said: "Excuse me, Mr. Bruce, I did not until this moment see that you were without an escort. Permit me. My name is Conkling," and he linked his arm in mine and we marched up to the desk together.

When Bruce's only child was born, he was named Roscoe Conkling Bruce, honoring Senator Conkling of New York for his friendship.

Bruce's first speech in the Senate dealt with the frauds of the 1875 Mississippi election. But Bruce was not concerned solely with the rights of black people. He spoke movingly of the mistreatment of Indians, and, saying he was the representative of "a people who but a few years ago were disqualified from enjoying the privilege of American citizenship," he voted against the Chinese Exclusion Bill. He also worked to allow all Southern whites to vote and helped build better levees along the Mississippi River.

His term ended in 1881. The Mississippi Legislature, now under white conservative control, replaced him with J. Z. George. Later Bruce was appointed register of the treasury, recorder of deeds for the District of Columbia, and temporary chairman of the 1880 national Republican convention. Toward the end of his Senate term, Bruce remarked to a friend that he would be the last black man to serve in the Senate. For 85 years he was right. But in 1966 Massachusetts elected Edward Brooke, and a black person was once again in the United States Senate.

---

Violence during the Copiah County elections in 1883 and the Jackson city elections in 1888 caused Congress to investigate, but nothing came of it. In Jackson, where a biracial Republican organization had held control since 1866, city

newspapers of  
"Negro rule."  
League" war  
attempted to

### ***The Exodus***

In 1879 thous  
homes and mo  
Their politica  
low prices, an  
ers, hopelessly  
Blacks continu  
Kansas painte  
might start an

About 30,00  
the winter of  
and hunger. A  
not any more  
wrote to black  
There are som  
their selves, wi

Most of the  
within a few  
World War I.



Blac