

Long, Jefferson (1836–1901)

Georgia. Born a slave. Mulatto. Literate. Tailor, storekeeper.



Georgia's only black Reconstruction congressman, Long was a self-educated native of the state. His ancestors were "slaves as far back as I can trace them." He was involved in the Georgia Educational Association in 1866, served as president of the Macon Union League branch, and in 1867 was employed as a speaker by the Republican Congressional Committee. In one speech at Macon, according to a newspaper account, Long's "appeal to the poor whites was so forcible and convincing, that several converts were made on the spot. . . . He asked how it was that the poor whites allowed themselves to partake so fully of the prejudices of the former slave-owners, when those prejudices were exercised with even greater force against the poor white." In 1869, Long served on the Republican state executive committee and was the chief organizer of the Georgia labor convention, which aimed to mobilize black agricultural workers to demand higher monthly wages.

Long's congressional career was brief; he was elected to serve only in the short session (December 1870–March 1871) of the 41st Congress, a post about which "nobody cared" according to black leader Henry M. Turner. But on 1 February 1871, Long became the first black representative to address the House, in a speech opposing the removal of political disabilities from former Confederates barred from officeholding under the Fourteenth Amendment. These, he said, were "the very men who have committed these Ku Klux outrages." Long himself had been threatened by the Klan, and his home was protected by armed guards. Long held no office after leaving Congress but remained involved in Republican politics. He was a delegate to the party's national conventions of

1872, 1876, and 1880 and to the state Republican convention of 1880. In that year, disillusioned with control of the Georgia party by whites, he supported a Democrat for governor.

According to the census of 1870, Long owned \$1,900 in personal property. The Reverend Theophilus G. Steward, pastor of the Macon A.M.E. Church at which Long worshiped, later recalled that Long's tailor shop "had much of the fine custom of the city. His stand in politics ruined his business with the whites who had been his patrons chiefly. His goods were of a superior class such as the freedmen at that time were not buying." By the early 1870s, Long owned a liquor shop, which went out of business in 1873. Later, he operated a dry-cleaning establishment and acquired a modest amount of property. Long died in Macon.

John M. Matthews, "Jefferson Franklin Long: The Public Career of Georgia's First Black Congressman," *Phylon*, 42 (1981), 145–56. Theophilus G. Steward, *Fifty Years in the Gospel Ministry* (Philadelphia, 1921), 129. Griffin *American Union*, 11 October 1867. *Congressional Globe*, 41st Congress, 3d Session, 881–82. *Atlanta Constitution*, 24 April 1880. Foner and Lewis, *Black Worker*, II, 4–6. Dun and Company Records. Schenck List. KKK Hearings, Georgia, 1037. Manuscript U.S. Census, 1870.