The arrival of Senator Hiram Revels of Mississippi and Representative Joseph Rainey of South Carolina on Capitol Hill in 1870 ranks among the great paradoxes in American history; just a decade earlier, these African Americans' congressional seats were held by southern slave owners. Moreover, the U.S. Capitol, where these newest Members of Congress came to work—the center of legislative government, conceived by its creators as the "Temple of Liberty"—had been constructed with the help of enslaved laborers. From this beginning, *Black Americans in Congress, 1870–2007* chronicles African Americans' participation in the federal legislature and their struggle to attain full civil rights.

ON THE COVER:

One of the preeminent African-American politicians of the 19th century, John Mercer Langston of Virginia was the only black Member of Congress to serve in elected office both before and after the Civil War. Langston's career as a proponent of civil rights, which spanned nearly five decades, was capped by his service in the U.S. House (1890–1891).

Langston, John Mercer. *From the Virginia Plantation to the National Capitol* (Hartford, CT: American Publishing Company, 1894)

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