



# FREEDOM: RECONSTRUCTION 1867

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

## About the David Mathews Center for Civic Life

The David Mathews Center for Civic Life is a nonpartisan nonprofit dedicated to strengthening Alabama’s civic life by engaging communities around issues of public importance, both historic and contemporary. Our programs for youth and adults foster skills, habits, and community practices that build and preserve a healthy democracy. We are a 501(c)3 organization located at the American Village in Montevallo, Alabama with a statewide impact. Learn more at [www.mathewscenter.org](http://www.mathewscenter.org).

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We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the students of *History of Us: Researching African American History in Tuscaloosa*. Based at Central High School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama it was the first year-long Black history course taught in a public school in the state of Alabama.

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## FOREWORD

One of the goals of the David Mathews Center’s educational programming is to engage learners in perspective-rich, place-based experiences that emphasize the difficult choices that everyday citizens have faced throughout history. Especially those that have called Alabama home. Our belief is that by examining history not as inevitable, but as the result of a series of choices, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of historical events and develop a greater appreciation for the role of citizens.

Throughout the years we have received many requests from educators for a resource that engages students in the challenging, often overlooked, and in many ways still being reckoned with story of Reconstruction. This story is part and parcel of Alabama history. Not only was Reconstruction intended to reintegrate ex-Confederate states including Alabama into the Union, but the decisions made regarding the rights and protections extended to freedpeople affected the 435,000 formerly enslaved people living in Alabama, roughly 45% of the state’s population. Oftentimes history, and especially the history of the Reconstruction, is taught from the perspective of those who governed Reconstruction, not those who lived it. In this issue guide, we will emphasize the experience of those who lived during Reconstruction, especially the challenging experiences and decisions faced by newly freedpeople during this era.

For educators, our goal is that the information and the deliberative discussion within this guide allows students to not just consider history in a new way but also to cultivate new skills. Perhaps our hopes for this resource can be best summed up in the words of one of our contributors, Dr. John Giggie: “In this guide, we are asking you to reconsider not just how we read the history of Reconstruction, but how we teach the history of Reconstruction.”

On that note, the David Mathews Center would like to extend the deepest gratitude to the scholars, educators, and students who contributed to the creation of this guide. Without their knowledge, wisdom, insight, and editing skills this resource would not exist.



# A BRIEF TIMELINE OF RECONSTRUCTION

**1619**

## Slave Trade Begins in Virginia

In August of 1619 the first ship carrying enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia. The slave trade would eventually bring millions of enslaved Africans to the New World.

**1641**

## Body of Liberties Published

The "Body of Liberties" is published in Massachusetts's Bay Colony. The document legalizes enslavement in the colony.

**1705**

## Passage of Virginia Slave Codes

The Virginia Slave Codes expanded rights for slaveholders and the definition of "slave" to include all non-native, non-Christian people. The Codes also prohibited any Black person from owning arms, employing whites, and allowed for the arrest of those that had escaped enslavement.

**1770**

## Crispus Attucks Killed

On March 5th, Crispus Attucks, a formerly enslaved man, is the first person shot and killed in the Boston Massacre, an early event in the colonists' fight for independence. Many free Black people fought in the Revolutionary War.

**1807**

## The Act of 1807

The Act Prohibiting the Importation of Slaves of 1807 goes into effect. A similar law forbade the importation of newly enslaved Africans to British colonies.

**1793**

## Fugitive Slave Act

On February 12th, the first Fugitive Slave Act is passed. The law gives slaveholders the right to search for those who escaped enslavement even within free states and made assisting those escaping enslavement a crime.

**1787**

## Northwest Ordinance

The Northwest Ordinance was created, which outlined the requirements for being admitted as a new state in the Northwestern territory. The Ordinance outlawed enslavement in the new territory.

**1776**

## July Fourth

The Second Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence declaring all men have unalienable rights to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." However, these rights were not applied to enslaved people and enslavement continued in the new nation.

**1816**

## American Colonization Society

The American Colonization Society begins to send free Blacks to a colony in Africa, rather than emancipate them in the United States. The colony became the Republic of Liberia in 1847.

**1820**

## Missouri Compromise

The Missouri Compromise admitted Missouri to the nation as a slave state and Maine as a free state. The Compromise also made enslavement illegal in all western U.S. territories north of Missouri's southern border.

**1831**

## Nat Turner's Rebellion

Nathaniel "Nat" Turner led a rebellion in August of 1831. Turner, along with 70 others, killed approximately 55 people (most of them slaveholders) before the rebellion was brought to an end by local and state militias.

**1857**

## Dred Scott v. Sandford

In Dred Scott v. Sandford, The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that all people of African descent, free or enslaved, were not citizens and therefore did not have the right to sue in a federal court.

**1854**

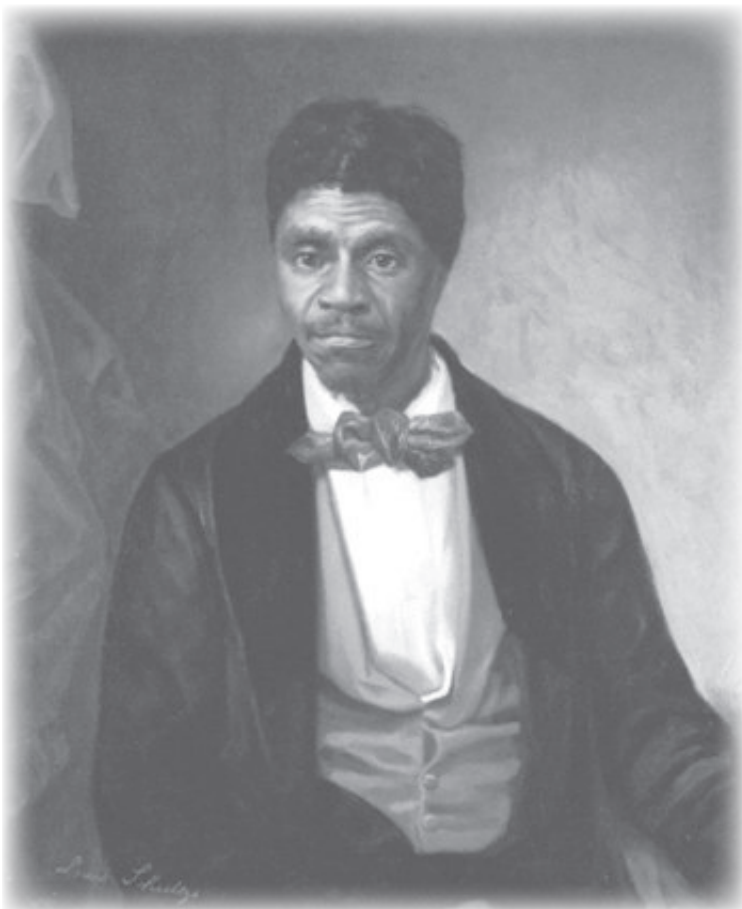
## Kansas-Nebraska Act

Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The act allowed settlers to vote on whether their territory would become a free or slave state. Thousands of Americans from both the North and South migrated to Kansas to influence the vote, leading to a violent outbreak known as "Bleeding Kansas."

**1852**

## Uncle Tom's Cabin Published

Abolitionist Harriet Beecher Stowe published Uncle Tom's Cabin, a novel that revealed the plight of the enslaved and the moral bankruptcy of slaveholders. The novel is the best selling book of the 19th century. Its popularity helped to spread anti-slavery sentiment, especially in the North.



Portrait of Dred Scott. Image: Wikimedia Commons



# A BRIEF TIMELINE OF RECONSTRUCTION

**1859**

## Raid on Harper's Ferry

On October 16th, 1859, Abolitionist John Brown attempts to incite a rebellion and raids a federal armory in Harpers Ferry, Virginia. Brown and his followers are quickly defeated by Colonel Robert E. Lee.

**1860**

## Abraham Lincoln Elected

Abraham Lincoln is elected President of the United States, prompting seven southern states to secede and create the Confederate States of America.

**1861**

## Civil War Begins

The Civil War begins after Confederate troops fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston South Carolina. After the battle four more states joined the Confederacy.

**1863**

## Emancipation Proclamation

Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation is issued, freeing all enslaved people in the rebelling Confederate States. The Proclamation represents the Union's intention to fight for the freedom of enslaved peoples, however, it does not free enslaved people in states still loyal to the Union.

**1865**

## Juneteenth

On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger issues an official order freeing enslaved people in Texas. While the Emancipation Proclamation was issued over two years prior, many remained enslaved in Texas and other remote areas of the Confederacy until after the end of the Civil War.

**1865**

## President Lincoln Assassinated

On April 15, 1865, President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated at the Ford Theater by Confederate sympathizer and well-known actor, John Wilkes Booth.

**1865**

## Robert E. Lee Surrenders

On April 3, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrenders his troops to Union General Ulysses S. Grant in Virginia. However, it is another two months before all Confederates lay down arms and sixteen months before the war is declared officially over.

**1865**

## Freedmen's Bureau Created

In March of 1865, Congress creates the Freedmen's Bureau to provide aid to millions of newly freedpeople, through the creation of hospitals, schools, and distribution of rations.

**1865**

## Thirteenth Amendment Ratified

In December the Thirteenth Amendment is ratified abolishing all enslavement within the United States except as a criminal punishment. In response southern states enact Black Codes and white supremacist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan are founded.

**1866**

## Civil Rights Act of 1866

On April 9, 1866, despite President Johnson's veto, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 passes in Congress. This law recognizes all born on United States soil as citizens. This protection does not extend to Indigenous Americans.

**1867**

## The Reconstruction Acts Passed

Congress passed the Reconstruction Acts. The Acts divided the former Confederacy into five military districts and required elections in which Black men were able to vote. Southern states are required to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment and write new constitutions to be approved by Congress.

**1866**

## Memphis Riot

From May 1-3, 1866, white civilians and police killed 46 Black civilians and destroy 90 houses, schools and churches during the Memphis Riot. Shortly after, on July 30, 1866, police killed more than 40 Black and white Republicans and wound 150 more during the New Orleans Massacre.



Illustration of the U.S. House of Representatives during the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment Image: Harper's Weekly via Wikimedia Commons



## Enslavement in the New World

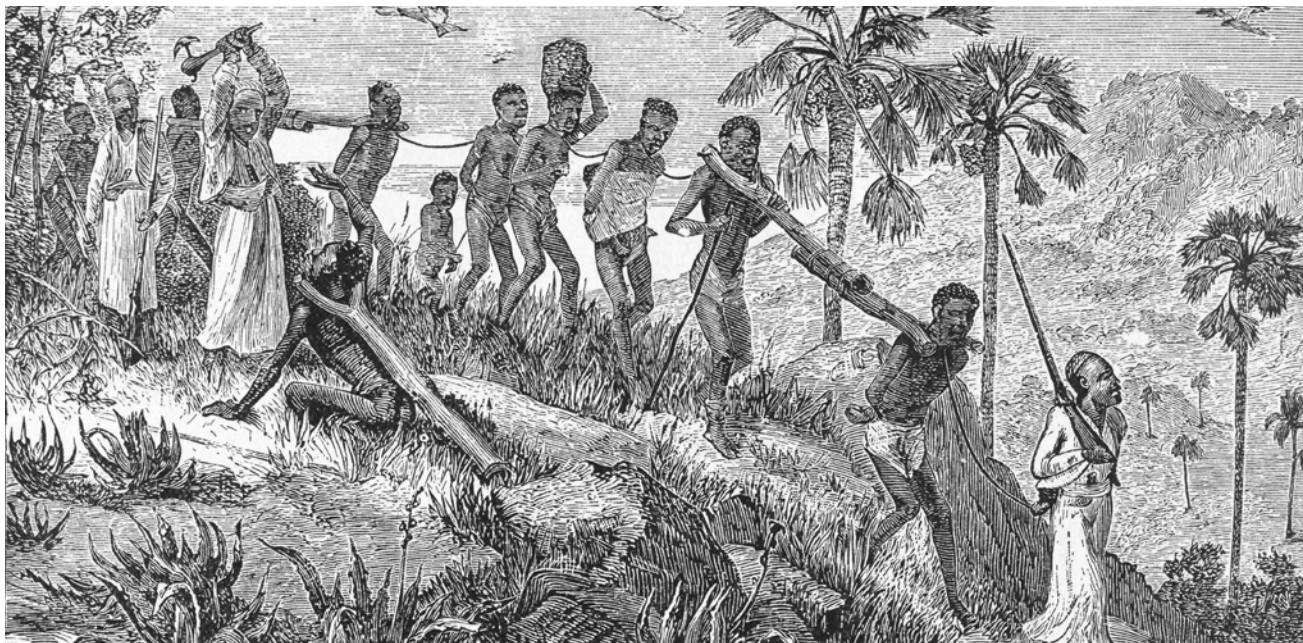


Image: New York Public Library.

While enslavement had existed for thousands of years, the demand for labor in Europe and European colonies resulted in a burgeoning slave trade from Africa beginning in the 15th century. Before the slave trade reached Africa, many of the kingdoms of Africa were flourishing. Countries such as Ghana and Mali were rich with natural resources like gold. In fact, the Kingdom of Mali was one of the richest in the world and bigger in landmass than western Europe. However, due in part to the kidnapping and **trafficking** of Africans, the economy and population of the continent soon declined.

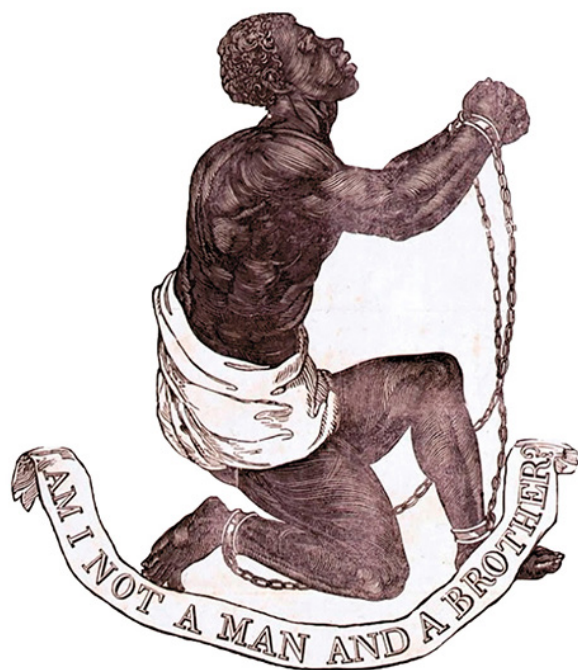
The first slave ship from Africa to reach the American colonies landed at Point Comfort in Hampton, Virginia Colony in 1619, carrying roughly 20 trafficked Angolans. The demand for enslaved laborers only increased with the growth of the colonies. By the beginning of the Revolution, over 104,000 African people had been trafficked into enslavement in the colonies.

## The Act of 1807

Opposition to the slave trade grew as the United States of America was being established. The first legislative attempt to end the slave trade was The Act of 1807. This law banned the importation of enslaved people. Those who violated the law would be fined up to \$20,000.

However, the Act of 1807 had a flaw: it did not ban the slave trade *within* the United States. While there were 4 million enslaved people in the United States at the time of the 1860 census, only 252,652 had been trafficked from Africa. Most enslaved people were born into enslavement in the United States, therefore, the Act of 1807 was of little consequence to most slaveholders.

Families were often separated as more enslaved people were relocated from mid-Atlantic states to deep south **plantations**, especially cotton plantations, which produced the South's biggest cash crop. By 1860, One in three people in the South were Black and ninety percent of the black population was enslaved. While smaller farms owned 53% of the total enslaved population, typically having fewer than 40 enslaved laborers, plantations could have hundreds.



By the early 1800s, anti-slavery sentiment was growing throughout the world. Above, the official medallion of the Society of the Abolition of Slavery in Britain. Image: Josiah Wedgwood via Wikimedia Commons

## The Experience of Enslavement

The life of enslaved people looked differently depending on where they lived and worked. While the vast majority of enslaved people worked on farms and plantations, many also worked on railroad tracks, in factories, or in homes. All were legally considered the property of their owners and did not have individual rights. Narratives written by those that escaped or were **emancipated** from enslavement illustrate the violent and **inhumane** treatment they faced from slave traders, owners, and overseers.

One narrative, written by Olaudah Equiano, describes his experience being trafficked from his native country of Benin to America via the Middle Passage. The Middle Passage was a trans-Atlantic shipping route used by slave traders. Through this route millions of enslaved Africans were taken to the Americas and sold. Ten to fifteen percent of the enslaved passengers died during the journey. Olaudah Equiano described the condition of a slave ship in his narrative:

*“When I looked round the ship [I] saw...a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow...I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste anything...I now wished for the last friend, Death, to relieve me. But soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me [food]; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands... and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely...The shrieks of the women, and the groans*

Further cruelty awaited those that survived the Middle Passage. Most enslaved people were sold at auction, alongside livestock, food, and tools. One journalist observed, “The expression on the faces of all who stepped on the [auction] block was always the same, and told of more anguish than it is in the power of words to express.”

Enslaved people typically worked six days per week. Slaveholders were allowed to work enslaved people as hard as they wanted, to treat them however they wanted and were legally allowed to abuse the enslaved.

During the Great Depression, the Works Project Administration (WPA) paid writers to interview formerly enslaved people that were still alive. One man, Walter Calloway from Birmingham, Alabama, recounted the brutality he witnessed from an overseer, mentioning one 13-year-old girl, who was whipped so hard “she nearly died and always afterward she would have [seizures].”

Purchasing enslaved people was expensive and enslavers viewed them as “property.” Slaveholders and overseers would go to oppressive lengths to ensure that enslaved people did not escape. Adeline, a formerly enslaved woman, shared her memories of the overseer at the plantation:

*“The Overseer began to drive us ‘round like droves of cattle. Every time they would hear the Yankees was coming they would take us out in the woods and hide us. Finally, they sold us ... I have seen [those that were] liable to run away with their legs chained to a tree or wagon wheels.”*



Portrait of Olaudah Equiano. Image: Wikimedia Commons

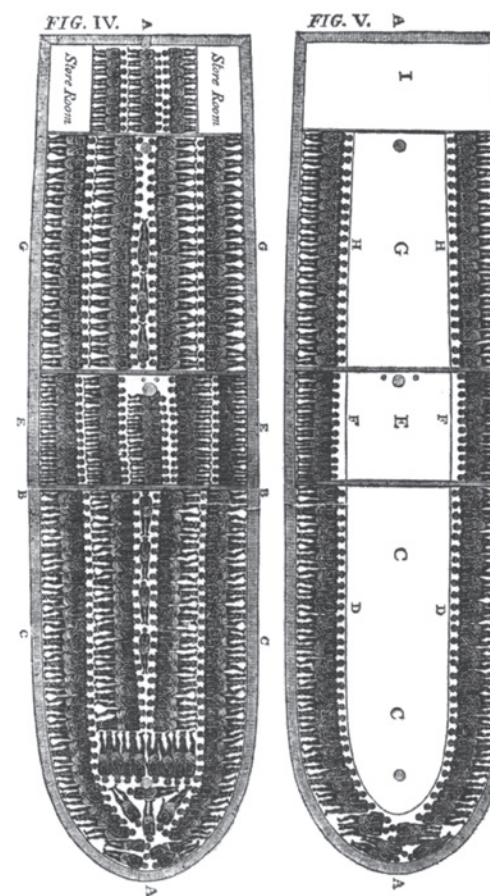


Diagram of slave ship. Image: Wikimedia Commons



## Slave Codes



Photograph of formerly enslaved men, women, and children reading books at the Freedman's Village in Arlington, Virginia during the Civil War. Before being emancipated, most enslaved people were illiterate due to laws known as Slave Codes, which made educating slaves illegal. Image: Library of Congress

Laws known as Slave Codes were passed throughout the South to strengthen the rights of slaveholders by further controlling and oppressing the enslaved Black population. These laws made it illegal to educate enslaved people. This meant that the majority of enslaved people were unable to read. Marriages between enslaved people were not legally binding, making it easy for white slave traders and owners to split up Black families, even separating children from their mothers. Enslaved people were not allowed to own or carry guns as the white population feared slave uprisings. When enslaved people were accused of crimes they were sent to separate courts and their punishments were often extreme including death. However, crimes committed by owners against enslaved people were legally protected.

## Slave Rebellions

Long before they were legally emancipated, enslaved people were fighting for freedom. The first recorded slave rebellion in North America occurred in 1663 in Virginia. Another 250 slave rebellions occurred before 1865.

One of the most well known slave revolts happened early on August 22, 1831, in Southampton, Virginia when Nat Turner, along with 70 other armed enslaved people and freed Blacks killed approximately 55 people (most of them slaveholders) before the rebellion was brought to an end by local and state militias. Nat Turner avoided capture by authorities for over a month, before facing execution.

In 1859, **abolitionist** John Brown attempted to incite a rebellion and raid a federal armory in Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Brown hoped the rebellion would end slavery forever. However, Brown and his followers were defeated by Colonel Robert E. Lee on October 19th. Brown was executed in December of 1859.



Colorized photograph of abolitionist John Brown. Image: Augustus Washington via Wikimedia Commons.

## The Underground Railroad

Beginning in the late 1700s, abolitionists banded together to create a route that allowed enslaved people to escape to freedom. Managed in large part by the **Society of Quakers**, the route stretched from the southern states to the free northern states and Canada. It became known as the "Underground Railroad."

In 1832, the first escape through the Underground Railroad, the escape of Tice Davids, was formally recorded. By the 1840s most of the United States had heard that a secret route was allowing enslaved people to escape to freedom.

The most famous member of the Underground Railroad was Harriet Tubman. In 1849, Tubman escaped from Maryland to Philadelphia. After her escape, she returned to slave states to guide groups of enslaved people to freedom. Tubman claimed to have never lost a passenger and is known as the "Moses of Her People." During the two-day Raid on Combahee Ferry, Tubman and the Union Army freed over 700 enslaved people. An estimated 100,000 enslaved people escaped through the Underground Railroad between 1810 and 1850.

However, in the South the Fugitive Slave Acts made the group's operations especially difficult. In 1793, the first act allowed for the punishment of those helping enslaved people escape. It also permitted the capture and return of escaped enslaved people found in free states. In 1850, the second Fugitive Slave Act set up a system of commissioners and "courts" that supported slaveholders during disputes.

## Frederick Douglass

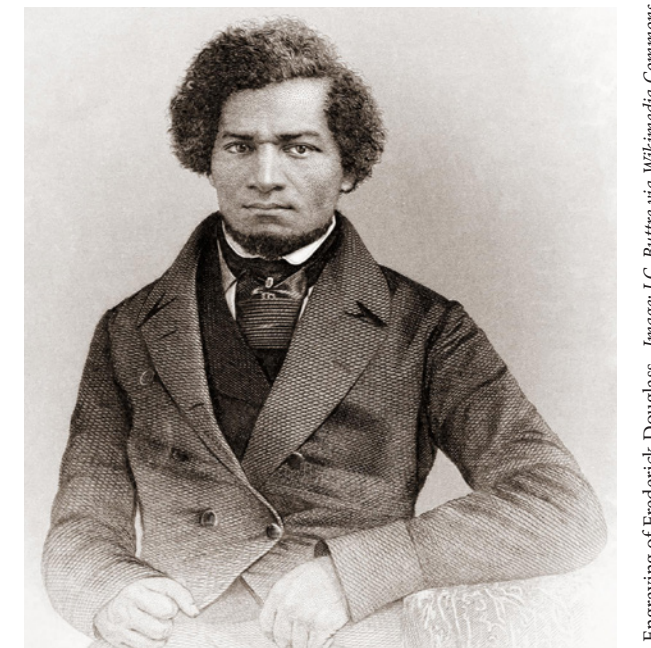
Frederick Douglass was born into enslavement in Maryland in 1818. As a child, his owner's wife taught him to read and write, despite the Slave Codes banning the education of enslaved people. He escaped to freedom in 1838, with the assistance of his first wife, Anna Murray. He became one of the most well known abolitionists of his time and was a respected writer, lecturer, and political advocate. One of his most famous works is *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, a Slave* which recounted his experience in and escape from enslavement.

## Dred Scott v. Sandford

Some enslaved people, including Frederick Douglass, saved the funds to formally purchase their freedom. Some were granted freedom by their owners while others, including Dred Scott, were refused the opportunity to purchase their freedom from their owners. In 1857, Dred Scott sued for his freedom. Scott had been living with his owner in free states for several years. Scott and his wife both sued their owner for freedom in St. Louis based on a Missouri law. The law stated that an enslaved person brought to a free territory was automatically freed and could not be re-enslaved. In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Congress had no right to prohibit enslavement in new territories and that United States Constitution was not meant to recognize or include Black people as American citizens. Any person of African descent, free or enslaved, was not an American citizen, according to the Supreme Court,—therefore Scott did not have the right to sue in a federal court.



Photograph of Harriet Tubman. Image: Benjamin F. Powelson via Wikimedia Commons



Engraving of Frederick Douglass. Image: J.C. Buttre via Wikimedia Commons



## PRESIDENTIAL RECONSTRUCTION



Photograph of the 1st Louisiana Native Guard, an all-Black Union regiment. Image: Wikimedia Commons

In 1863, two years before the end of the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. This executive order emancipated all enslaved people within the Confederate states. However, it did not free those enslaved in states loyal to the Union. None the less, the Emancipation Proclamation boosted morale and contributed to the enlistment of 179,000 Black men, many of them newly freed, into the Union Army. Even Harriet Tubman operated as a scout for the 2nd Carolina Volunteers.

On April 9, 1865, Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered to Union General Ulysses S. Grant near Appomattox Courthouse, Virginia. Only seven days after Lee's surrender President Abraham Lincoln was assassinated in the Ford's Theater by John Wilkes Booth, a Confederate sympathizer and well-known actor. Lincoln was succeeded by Vice President Andrew Johnson, who was faced with the challenge of reconstructing the defeated South and reunifying the nation.

Johnson's **Reconstruction** plan was controversial from the start. He offered an automatic pardon from criminal prosecution to most non-land owning ex-Confederates. The only requirement was to sign an oath of loyalty to the United States. High-ranking Confederate military or government officials were required to seek a Presidential pardon, which Johnson willingly gave.

Johnson also allowed the readmission of Confederate states to the United States with only two requirements: Under the guidance of federally appointed Governors, the states had to draft new constitutions that renounced secession and the states had to support the Thirteenth amendment. Passed in December 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished all slavery (except as punishment for a crime) in the United States. However, many members of Congress were not satisfied because President Johnson did not support **suffrage** for freedpeople.

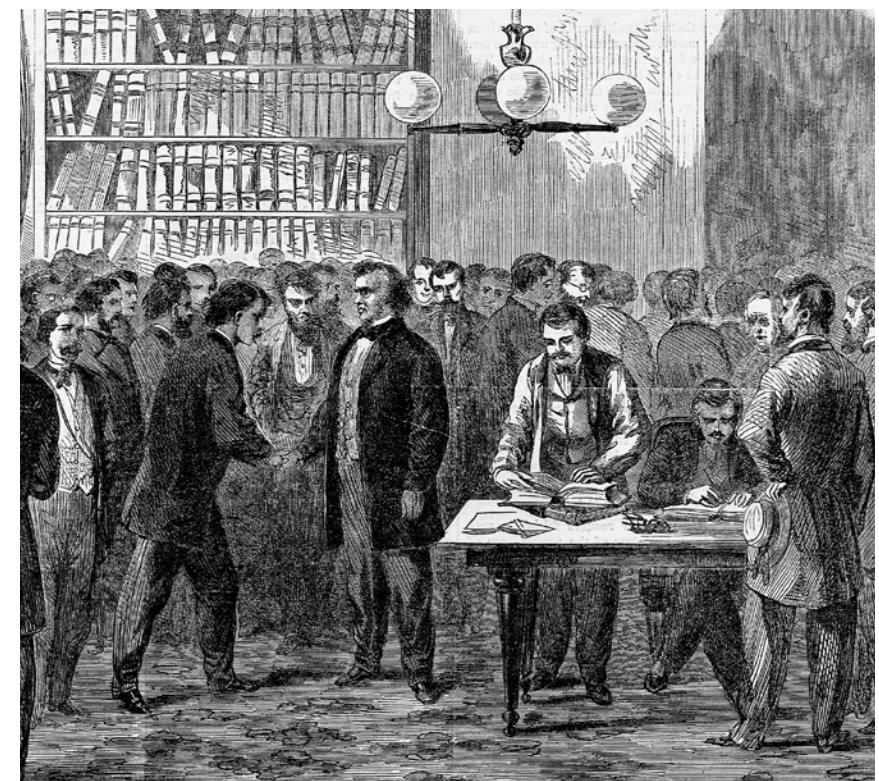
In the South, freedpeople's new freedoms were already being restricted through the passage of Black Codes. These laws were created to control the freed Blacks and strip them of their newly established rights. Many states required that freed people sign yearly labor contracts or risk being arrested and forced to be unpaid laborers. Others restricted the type of jobs freed people were allowed to take or limited the type of property they could own. As a result of the Black Codes, Johnson's unwillingness to extend civil liberties to freed people, and a lack of **punitive** measures against ex-Confederates, a group in Congress decided to take control of Reconstruction.

## CONGRESSIONAL RECONSTRUCTION

Congressional reconstruction was started by the Radical Republicans, led by Thaddeus Stevens and Charles Sumner. The group was known for their **progressive** ideas and called for direct government intervention. Under their plan for Reconstruction freed people would have the chance at a free-labor economy and could choose where and for whom they worked.

The Civil Rights Act of 1866 secured citizenship for all males born in the United States. However, women and **Indigenous** Americans did not gain full citizenship and voting rights until the 20th century. Congress overrode Johnson's veto in March 1867 to pass the Reconstruction Acts.

The Acts divided the former Confederate states into five military districts and required these states to create new constitutions that guaranteed formerly enslaved people emancipation, civil liberties, and universal male suffrage. States were also required to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment, which granted full citizenship and equal legal protections to all "persons born or naturalized in the United States." These legal acts effectively created a new group of American citizens. Like the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the Amendment excluded the recognition of Indigenous peoples.



Political cartoon depicting President Johnson's pardon of ex-Confederates. Johnson's willingness to grant amnesty to over 7,000 high-ranking Confederate officials angered Radical Republicans. Image: Harpers Weekly via Wikimedia Commons

## THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU

The Freedmen's Bureau was established on March 3, 1865, two months before the end of the Civil War. It was tasked with establishing schools as well as providing food and housing to recently freedpeople. It also helped many find employment and negotiate labor contracts. They also operated as courts and provided legal assistance, especially with contract disputes. Some also performed marriages.

The Freedmen's Bureau was originally intended to be a temporary service, assisting with the transition from enslavement to freedom through the end of the war and only one year after. However, in 1866 Congress proposed extending the Bureau's powers and the length of time the organization was able to exist. The law was passed despite Johnson's **veto**. The Bureau's workforce remained relatively small, and its resources limited. It also faced push-back from white supremacists as well as Southerners that viewed the Bureau as government overreach. Even so, it was able to provide food, healthcare, and education to freedpeople and poor whites throughout the South.



Distribution of rations to freed people in Uniontown, Alabama. Image: National Archives



## THE CHALLENGES OF RECONSTRUCTION



Photograph of Charleston, South Carolina in 1865. Reconstruction aimed to not only reunify the nation, but also rebuild the war torn South.  
Image: George N. Barnard via Wikimedia Commons

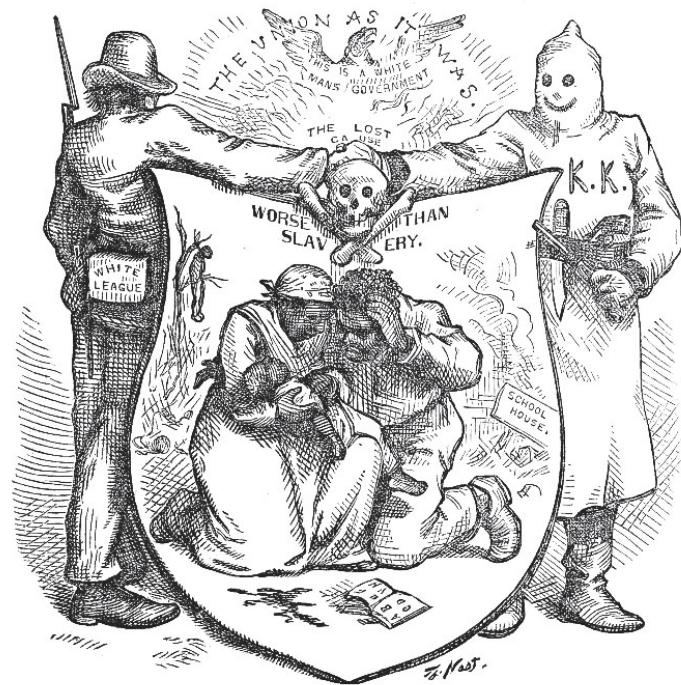
Freedpeople faced many challenges, in spite of newly granted freedom and opportunity. Many white Americans across the nation were unhappy with the post-war changes and sought to suppress the rights and voices of the newly freed population. Freedpeople faced economic, educational, political and legal challenges in addition to the continued threat of racial violence.

### VIOLENCE

After the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment freedpeople faced violent backlash from white Americans seeking to suppress Black voices. The Ku Klux Klan rose from the remnants of the Confederacy in Pulaski, Tennessee in 1865. Their goal was to restore white supremacy through threats and violence against Black citizens and leaders as well as white Republican politicians. In 1866, white civilians, Democratic politicians, and law enforcement attacked the Black citizens of Memphis and New Orleans. In total, 90 Black citizens were killed, over 100 more were injured, and 90 homes, schools, and businesses were damaged.

Right: A political cartoon depicts two white supremacist organizations, the Klu Klux Klan and the White League, shaking hands over "The Lost Cause." Beneath them a freed couple holds their child. A lynching victim can be seen in the background.

Image: Thomas Nast, Harper's Weekly via Wikimedia Commons



## EDUCATION

Many states had laws forbidding the education of enslaved people, so the majority of freedpeople were illiterate. For many education was the first step to freedom. Some Black soldiers were educated by the military during the war. After the war, the Freedmen's Bureau and the Black community established schools in the South to educate freed children and adults. Soon after, Black universities and colleges emerged that largely focused on job training for teachers. Education was viewed as a means of rising above oppression, fighting racism, and reaching equality. However, not all freedpeople were able to access these schools. And, even with an education, freedpeople throughout the country and particularly in the South still faced racism and **oppression**.



Image: Library of Congress

### ECONOMICS

The end of slavery meant a new opportunity to create a free-labor market in the South. This would mean that all individuals, including freedpeople, would be able to choose their employer and their work, negotiate pay, and have the ability to quit and change jobs.

Perhaps you've heard of the "40 acres and a mule" that were promised to freed people after the Civil War. The idea originated from General Sherman's order that land confiscated from ex-Confederates should be re-distributed to freedpeople. However, most of the land was returned to its former owners during Presidential Reconstruction. With little money and no land, most freed people were forced to rely on white landowners for employment.

Without the ability to read, most freedpeople could not negotiate written contracts. Landowners created work contracts that greatly disadvantaged workers, using a system known as sharecropping. Sharecroppers farmed an employer's land and the employer received a large portion of the crop yield (often more than half) as a form of rent. Sharecroppers had difficulty making ends meet and rarely were able to save enough to purchase their own land. When disputes between sharecroppers and landowners were brought to court, the legal system typically sided with the landowner.

While finding employment and negotiating contracts was difficult, business ownership was out of the reach for most freedpeople. Banks were unlikely to provide business loans and those lucky enough to have the money needed to start a business faced discrimination. White shoppers were unlikely to visit the stores owned by Black citizens.



## POLITICS AND LAW



Engraved according to act of Congress in the year 1872 by Currier & Ives in the Office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

ROBERT C. DE LARGE, M.C. of S. Carolina.

JEFFERSON H. LONG, M.C. of Georgia.

U.S. Senator H.R. REVELS, of Mississippi.

BENJ. S. TURNER, M.C. of Alabama.

JOSIAH T. WALLS, M.C. of Florida.

JOSEPH H. RAINY, M.C. of S. Carolina.

R. BROWN ELLIOT, M.C. of S. Carolina.

### THE FIRST COLORED SENATOR AND REPRESENTATIVES.

In the 41<sup>st</sup> and 42<sup>nd</sup> Congress of the United States.

NEW YORK, PUBLISHED BY CURRIER & IVES, 125 NASSAU STREET.

Image: Currier and Ives via Library of Congress

Gaining political representation was a huge opportunity for freedpeople. During Reconstruction, the very first Black politicians were elected, and the first ballots were cast by freedmen. Many freedpeople believed that changing the law was an important way to improve their position in society, since the laws as they existed largely worked against them. The Black Codes created during Presidential Reconstruction were a clear indication that without the presence of Black political voices, the white South would recreate slavery under a different name. However, participating in politics came with risks.

Black politicians were discriminated against and often threatened with violence. Even white politicians who supported Black rights were at risk. Violent groups used intimidation to prevent freedpeople from voting or to control how they voted. **Poll taxes** and **literacy tests** created barriers to voting. If an individual was unable to pay or to prove they could read, they were turned away.

However, the “Grandfather clause” allowed an individual to vote if their grandfather could vote, regardless of their ability to pay poll taxes and or pass literacy tests. This meant that poor, uneducated white men were still able to vote when Black men could not.

In addition to widespread events of racial violence, many freedpeople faced vigilante justice when they were accused (often wrongly) of a crime. Few had access to a fair trial. Instead, many Black citizens were unjustly killed, often by lynching, at the hands of mobs, white supremacy groups, and local police.

## WHAT DOES FREEDOM MEAN IN 1867?



Image: Henry P. Moore via Getty Images

It is the summer of 1867 and Black citizens of Alabama must forge new lives as free people. Today we are asking you to consider Reconstruction from the perspective of freedpeople in this era of our state’s history, who were faced with difficult, and limited, choices after emancipation. Many challenges were facing Black citizens including racial violence, economic inequality, and political obstacles. Despite the limited options, there were choices to be made. For freedpeople many new opportunities could lie ahead: the chance to pursue an education, the ability to participate in a free labor system, to open businesses, own land, establish communities and families, and gain political representation. As freedpeople work together to address community concerns and capitalize on new opportunities, many are asking “what does freedom mean?”

### RULES OF DELIBERATION

This deliberative discussion is an opportunity to better understand a difficult choice made in history and the diverse perspectives that citizens had about what choice should be made. The process recognizes that every choice has benefits and tradeoffs - there is no “right” answer. However, by examining these approaches together, we will not only gain a more nuanced understanding of history; we will develop civic skills that prepare us to better examine current issues and make collaborative choices together in the future.

You are expected to engage and participate in the discussion and support an environment of respect:

- Everyone understands this is not a debate. There are no winners or losers.
- Everyone is encouraged to participate, but no one should dominate.
- Participants should address one another, not the moderator.
- The moderator must remain neutral.
- Participants should consider fairly and fully each approach.
- Participants should examine fully all the tradeoffs involved in an approach.
- Actively listening is as important as speaking.





## APPROACH ONE:

### Freedom is Safety & Legal Protection

Our most pressing concern is safety. Since the end of the war white supremacists have been working to control us through violence and intimidation. Terrorist groups, like the Ku Klux Klan, use threats and brutality to prevent freedmen from voting or running for office, to control how freedmen vote, and to drive out any politicians working in the interest of freed people. Some major cities in the South, like Memphis and New Orleans, have seen racially motivated riots in which mobs of white supremacists and police officers attacked gatherings of Radical Republicans, or rampaged through Black neighborhoods destroying homes and killing Black citizens. Throughout the South, Black Codes have been enacted and used to restrict our freedom and legally confined us to the status of second-class citizens. **Now it is imperative that the freedom and safety of freed people is secured within the law and society.**

#### ACTIONS

Avoid any action that might instigate violent radicals and stay silent when confronted with threats and intimidation.

Protect ourselves by fighting fire with fire. We should form groups to defend ourselves and communities against violence and threats.

Advocate for better local law enforcement and new local and national laws that would ensure not just physical safety but also protect the civil rights of freed people.

Move to other areas of the country, such as the North and West, or emigrate to Canada or West Africa following the promise and hope of safer and freer lives.

Image: G.G. Fish & J.P. Soule via Library of Congress

#### TRADEOFFS

A lack of action might be viewed as compliance, and circumstances are unlikely to improve if we do nothing.

We may still be unable to protect ourselves from violent groups that are often supported by law enforcement. We would also be at risk of legal consequences and being labeled as instigators of racial violence.

This means trusting a legal system that has historically ignored pleas for safety and even worked to further subjugate people of color. And, in many cases, local law enforcement is part of the problem.

Moving is expensive, and we risk leaving behind our friends and family with no guarantee that we will find a better situation elsewhere. Moving to new territory might also result in threats from that area's population.



THE HAMBURG RIOT, JULY, 1876

## PROFILE:

### Hamburg, South Carolina Massacre

Founded in 1821, Hamburg, South Carolina, enjoyed two decades as a burgeoning business center, with a rail station, a local bank, and a port on the South Carolina canal. In the 1840s the city suffered multiple floods and experienced economic decline. Hamburg was nearly a ghost town by the start of the civil war. However, at the end of the Civil War, the town became a major settlement for freedpeople and a stronghold of the Republican Party.

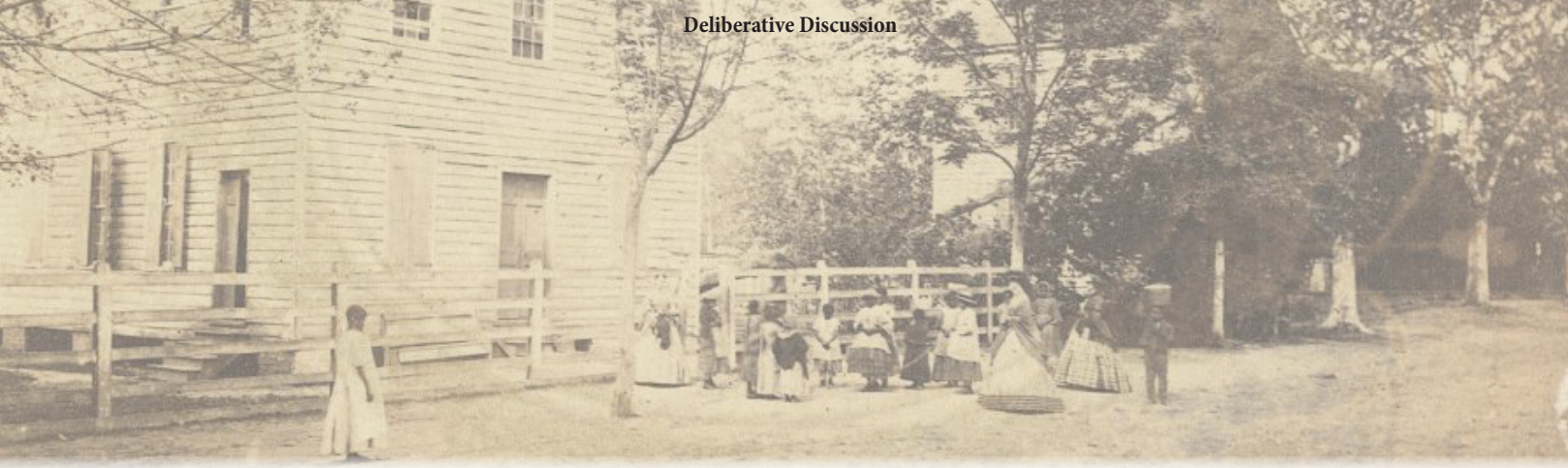
From 1868 to 1876, freed Black men gained a majority in the state legislature. Three of the elected legislators were residents of Hamburg. Unfortunately, the prosperity and political power of the freed people of Hamburg, also made the city a target for white supremacist paramilitary groups such as the Ku Klux Klan, Red Shirts, the White League and rifle clubs. These white supremacist groups threatened violence, attacking and intimidating Black citizens as well as Black men running for office.

In 1874, the mayor of Hamburg, recognizing the need for local law enforcement and protection, requested the National Guard formally recognize 75 citizens of the city as a state sanctioned militia. The governor agreed to the mayor's request, and soon after a militia was formed.

However, on July 4, 1876, after the militia refused to hand over arms, hundreds of white supremacist Red Shirts retaliated by attacking the militia and the town of Hamburg. The Red Shirts looted the city and killed 7 citizens, including state legislator Simon Coker. This event became known as the Hamburg Massacre. Of the 94 white men indicted in the massacre, none were prosecuted. The leader of the massacre, Benjamin Tillman, served as Governor of South Carolina from 1890-1894, before being elected to the U.S. Senate, where he served from 1895 until his death in 1918.

Image: Wikimedia Commons





## APPROACH TWO:

# Freedom is Equality through Employment & Education

Freedom cannot truly exist without equality of opportunity. Our ability to gain an education and to exercise control over labor contracts are central to achieving equality. During slavery, enslaved people were forced to labor without pay, so many are unable buy property. **In order to achieve economic equality, freed people must be paid fairly for our labor, be able to choose our employment circumstances, and have the ability to obtain our own property.** Similarly, we must have access to equal education. Without access to education during enslavement, the majority of Black Americans are illiterate. Unable to read or write, many freed people fear labor contracts will be used to further subjugate us. **While education is a slow solution to equality, and it may take many generations for the accomplishments of Black Americans to be recognized, education is ultimately the only means to protect, empower, and provide equality of opportunity for us and our descendants.**

## ACTIONS

Agree to contracts with white employers to exchange our labor for supplies, shelter, and/or a share of the crop, in the hope of eventually saving enough money to buy property.

Establish schools and colleges for the education of freed people.

Establish trade and technical schools that teach freed people skills needed in the workforce.

Move to pursue education at existing institutes elsewhere in the U.S. or outside of the country.

*Image: Sam Cooley via the Library of Congress*

## TRADEOFFS

Employers could write unfair contracts, trapping us in economically unjust situations, and the courts, which have historically privileged white landowners, will almost always side against us during any contract disputes.

As students, we may be unable to contribute to our families and could even become financial burdens. Schools could become the targets of violence.

While this might improve economic mobility, vocational programs might be seen as less intellectual or valuable than schools focused on traditional academics.

Existing schools and colleges may refuse to admit Black students. Moving, especially to another country, requires resources, and could further fracture Black families.



*Image: Frances Benjamin Johnston via the Library of Congress*

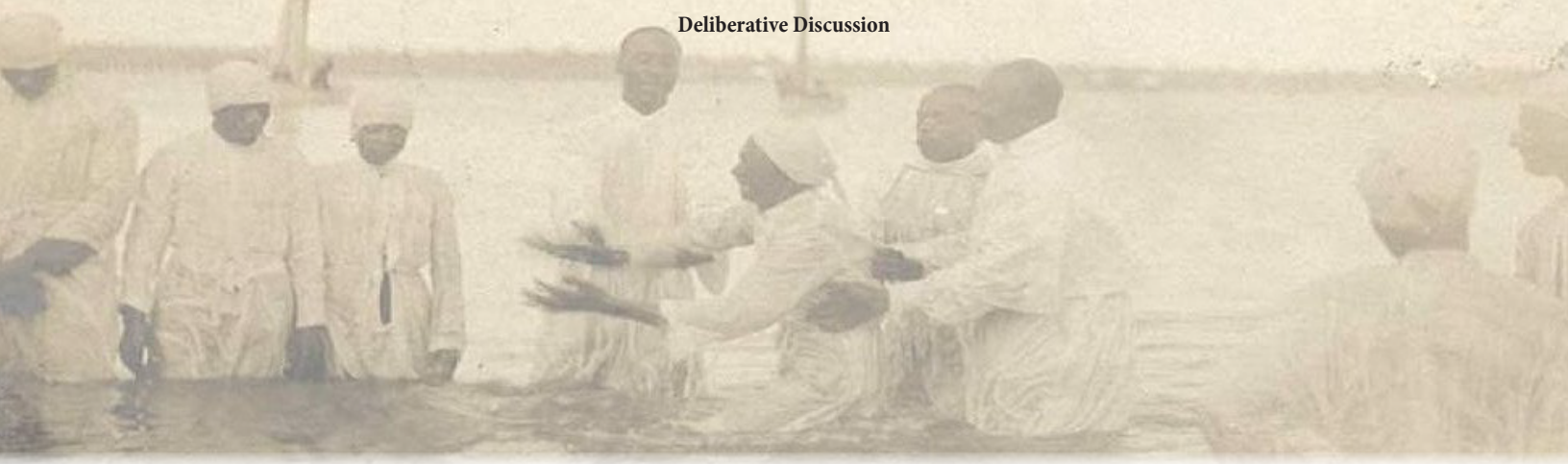
## PROFILE:

# Historically Black Colleges & Universities

The first college created for the purpose of educating people of African descent was founded in Pennsylvania in 1837. Founded with a \$10,000 gift from a wealthy Quaker philanthropist, the school, now known as Cheyney Institute, trained students to be educators. It was not long before philanthropists, churches, and missionary societies began establishing colleges for people of color throughout the Northern states. Many were “normal schools,” that prepared students for the teaching profession. Others were seminaries or agricultural and mechanical schools.

However, it wasn’t until after the Civil War that freed people in the South had the opportunity to receive education, let alone higher education. With the assistance of the Freedmen’s Bureau, aid societies throughout the South opened colleges and universities specifically for the newly freed. Schools such as Fisk University, in Nashville, Tennessee; Morehouse College, in Atlanta, Georgia; and later Tuskegee University in Tuskegee, Alabama, were founded for the express purpose of educating the formerly enslaved so that they could transition to a self-sufficient life. Over 90 of these colleges were created between 1861 and 1900, and these higher education institutions are known today as Historically Black Colleges and Universities.





## APPROACH THREE:

# Freedom is Self-Determination through Representation

The most significant virtue of freedom is the opportunity for self-determination. Before emancipation our lives were controlled by white owners. Even our ability to marry, to form families and communities, or to practice religion was limited or denied to us. Now we have the opportunity to reunite our families, to worship in our own churches and even to create our own communities. For the first time, Black men have the opportunity to vote and to hold office. We could now have a voice in government and a means to combat the misrepresentation of Black sentiment by white politicians. In order to achieve self determination as a people, we must unite as families, as communities, and as citizens. For many freed people, taking control of our own lives and futures is the very essence of freedom.

### ACTIONS

Form local churches, newspapers and other community institutions in order to create a sense of unity and a network of support for local freed people.

Focus on reuniting and strengthening formerly enslaved families. Families have the ability to provide care for individual members to young, old or otherwise unable to provide for themselves, as well as improving family members' quality of life.

Pursue political representation in local and federal government by running for office, supporting Black candidates, and voting during elections.

Form new, separate, and independent communities for freed people, so we can have complete control over all aspects of our communities and lives.

Image: Wikimedia Commons

### TRADEOFFS

Community institutions could become the targets of violence. Finding buildings and staff for such institutions requires resources we could use for other purposes.

Locating lost family members takes time and could prove an impossible task. Once a family unit is formed our individual mobility might be restricted by the needs of the group.

Those of us running for office risk physical harm. Office holders and voting citizens also face intimidation and the attempted manipulation of their political power by whites.

Finding the necessary land and resources while convincing other freed people to move to the new settlement would be challenging.



Nicodemus, Kansas. Image: Library of Congress

## PROFILE:

# Exodusters & Historically Black Communities

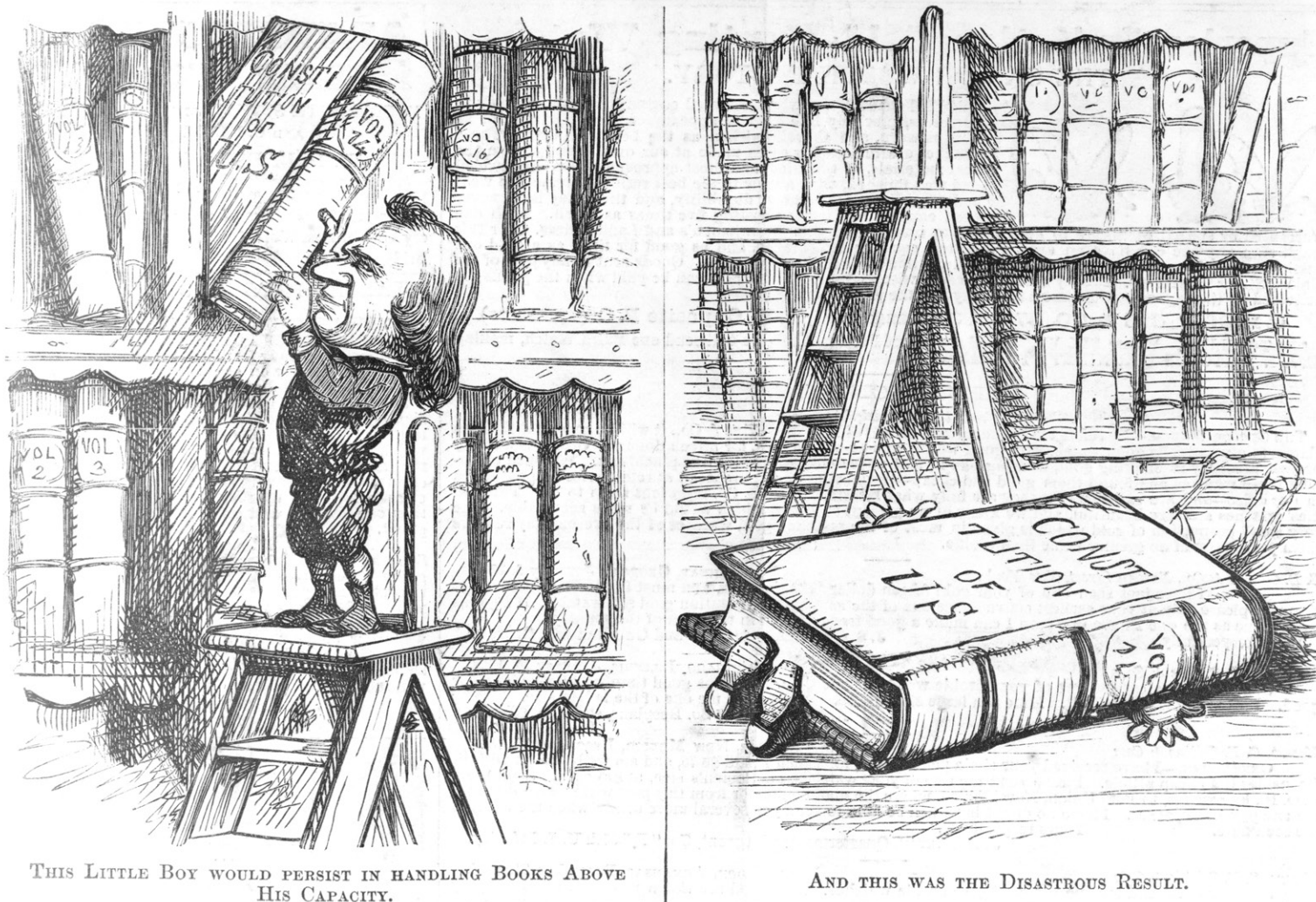
As far back as 1854, residents of Kansas were battling over their entrance to the Union. While citizens overwhelmingly favored entering the Union the question remained: would Kansas enter as a slave state or a free state? The many uprisings, protests, and violent demonstrations leading up to the decision resulted in the nickname "Bloody Kansas." Ultimately, Kansas entered the Union as a free state on January 29, 1861. Not long after, the state of Kansas emerged as a promised land for those escaping enslavement.

Shortly after the Civil War, as Jim Crow laws emerged in the South, many freedpeople in the South saw the need to establish their own communities to find prosperity and escape discrimination. First on the minds of many free people was Kansas, and the Kansas Freedman Association was more than happy to welcome the many thousands of freedpeople that migrated during the "Black Exodus" of 1879. Many of them were headed to communities founded and governed by formerly enslaved people, such as Nicodemus, Kansas. Nicodemus was founded in 1877 and soon welcomed 350 freed people from Kentucky. The community offered 19,200 acres of affordable land, and a 160-acre town center with everything from shops, to a courthouse, post office, and library.

Soon, Black-led townships and cities were emerging across the country, including in Alabama. Cities such as Tuskegee and Talladega emerged as centers for African-American scholarship, arts, and culture as a result of local colleges created to educate the formerly enslaved. Elsewhere in the south, such as Hobson City, Alabama, freed people focused on creating self-governing communities from scratch. For many freedpeople, in Alabama and across the South, moving to a community that had their interests at heart, was viewed as the best way to achieve freedom, equality, and prosperity.



## AFTERWORD: 10 Years of Progress & Setbacks



THIS LITTLE BOY WOULD PERSIST IN HANDLING BOOKS ABOVE HIS CAPACITY.

AND THIS WAS THE DISASTROUS RESULT.

Political cartoon depicting President Andrew Johnson. Image: Library of Congress

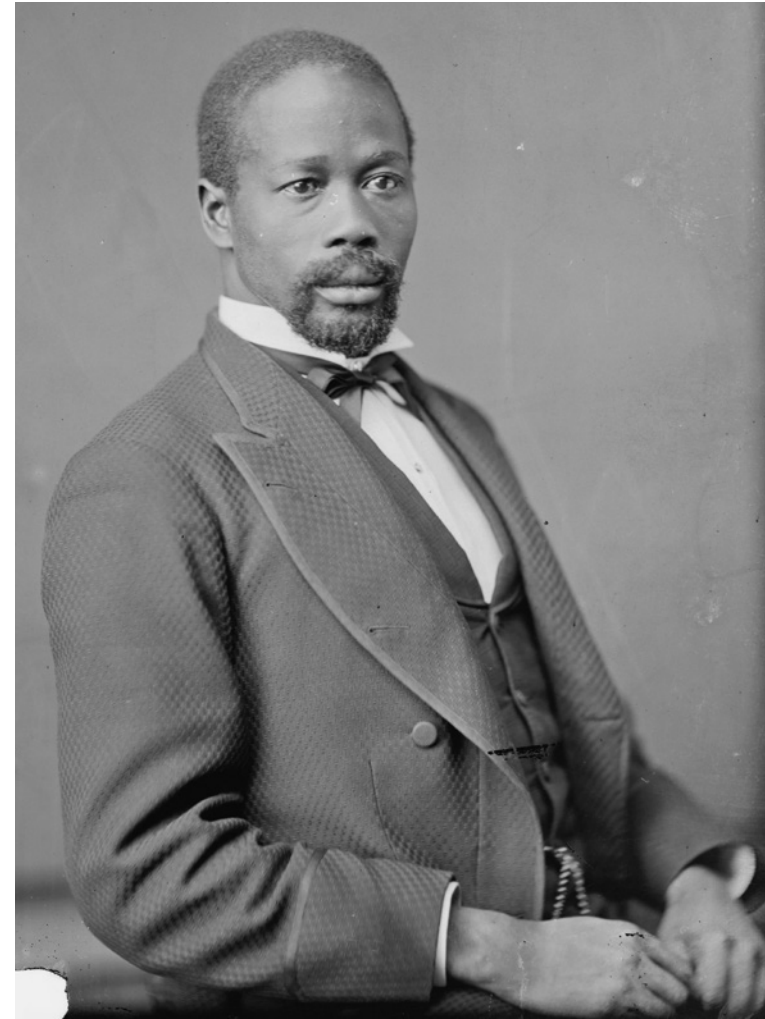
### THE END OF JOHNSON'S TERM

While freedpeople struggled with the challenges facing them and their communities, Congress and President Johnson continued to struggle with how to move forward as a nation. Despite Johnson's vetoes, by the end of 1867 Congress had already passed a number of bills including the Civil Rights Act of 1866, the Reconstruction Acts, and the Tenure of Office Act. The Tenure of Office Act limited Johnson's ability to remove federal officials already approved by Congress, including those appointed by Lincoln.

In 1868, tensions between Congress and the President reached a peak when the Radical Republicans moved to impeach Johnson, making him the first President in U.S. history to face impeachment. Congress accused Johnson of violating the Tenure of Office Act when he removed Edwin M. Stanton from the position of Secretary of War. Stanton had been appointed by Lincoln and openly opposed the President's Reconstruction policies.

After a two-month trial, the Senate failed to remove Johnson from office by a single vote, and Johnson's conflict with Congress continued through the rest of his term. Although he sought nomination at the 1868 Democratic National Convention, he received only four votes and was overwhelmingly defeated by Horatio Seymour. The following year, Union Army Commanding General Ulysses S. Grant was inaugurated as the 18th president of the United States.

## THE FIRST BLACK POLITICIANS



Jeremiah Haralson, was elected to the Alabama state senate in 1872 and the U.S. House of Representatives in 1875. Image: Library of Congress

In 1869, Congress passed the Fifteenth Amendment which stated: "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

The law went into effect in 1870 but, like the Fourteenth Amendment, the protections it granted did not extend to women or **Indigenous** Americans. The Fifteenth amendment expanded upon the second Reconstruction Acts, which required secessionist states to include universal male suffrage in their constitutions in order to be readmitted to the Union.

Throughout Reconstruction, at least 600 Black politicians -- the vast majority Republican -- were elected to state office, 16 to federal office and many more held local offices. A majority of Black voters voted Republican, and freedpeople constituted the majority of Republican voters in the South.

While the election of Black politicians was a sign of progress to many freedpeople, their political power wasn't representative of most freedpeople's experiences. Many Black leaders were free before the Emancipation Proclamation and had access to some education, including college. Many also had a background in church leadership.

For example, in 1870 Mississippi minister Hiram Revels became the first freedperson to serve in the U.S. Congress. He was elected by the Mississippi state legislature to fill a vacant U.S. Senate seat. Revel's legitimacy was challenged by Senate Democrats who claimed that he was not a U.S. citizen until 1868 when the Fourteenth Amendment passed and therefore did not meet the constitutional requirement of nine years of citizenship. The challenge was dismissed, and Revels took the oath of office on February 25, 1870. His term only lasted until March the following year. In 1874 Blanche K. Bruce, also from Mississippi, was elected and became the first Black Senator to serve a full term.

The same year Revels was elected, Joseph Rainey of South Carolina became the first Black member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Like Revels, his first term also ended in 1871; however, he went on to win four full consecutive terms, serving from 1870-1879.

In 1872, P.B.S. Pinchback became acting governor of Louisiana and the first Black American to serve as a state governor, a position he held until January 13, 1873.

During Reconstruction, Alabama elected three Black politicians to serve in federal office. Benjamin Turner became the first Black U.S. Representative for Alabama in 1871. James T. Rapier was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1873 and Jeremiah Haralson in 1875. Turner, Rapier, and Haralson, unable to garner enough support to win re-election, served single terms.



## THE KU KLUX KLAN

The terrorist organization known as the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) was founded in 1865. The purpose of the Klan and other white supremacist organizations, like the Knights of the White Camelia and the White Brotherhood, was to intimidate freed-people throughout the South and **disenfranchise** Black voters. The Klan used violent riots, assaults, and lynchings to attack and kill Black and white Republican leaders and voters. Between 1865 and 1877, over 2,000 Black Americans were victims of lynchings.

In 1868, Nathan Bedford Forrest, an ex-Confederate general, was elected the first Grand Wizard of the Klan. Proceeding the presidential election that year, the KKK escalated its violent tactics, prompting Congress to respond. Between 1870 and 1871, Congress passed three Enforcement Acts in an attempt to end the violence and protect the voting rights of freedmen. Together these laws made it a federal crime to use intimidation, violence, or bribery to interfere with the political rights of freedpeople. Additionally, the laws designated the Klan as a terrorist organization, and hundreds of members were arrested and tried. The Supreme Court declared the Enforcement Acts unconstitutional in 1882, and the Klan was re-established in 1915, increasing in influence during the 1920s.



Depiction of KKK assassinating Radical Republican G.W. Ashburn  
Image: Creative Commons

## PRESIDENT GRANT AND RECONSTRUCTION

In 1869, only one week after Congress first introduced the 15th Amendment, President Ulysses S. Grant took the oath of office. Grant's approach to Reconstruction was characterized by a desire for peace. He signed the Enforcement Acts to protect the rights of freedpeople while granting pardons to ex-Confederates. Under the terms of the Enforcement Acts, Grant often used federal troops to maintain law and order in Southern states. His attempt to forgive ex-Confederates while supporting the civil rights of freedpeople gained him critics on both sides of the aisle. He served from 1869-1877 but his two terms were marred by scandal. He did not seek reelection following the end of his second term.

## RISE OF THE REDEEMER SOUTH

Support for Reconstruction began to decline in the 1870s as northern Republicans grew more conservative. Economic depression in the South further boosted support for the Democratic party. In 1875, Grant refused to send federal troops to stop violence in Mississippi, marking a shift away from radical Reconstruction policy. At this point, Democratic governments began to replace Republicans throughout the South. The Democrats, referring to themselves as Redeemer Governments, claimed they were saving the South from a tyrannical federal government and "Black rule." By the election of 1876, only three southern states -- Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina -- were still governed by Reconstruction Republicans.

The election of 1876 was hotly contested. Democrat Samuel J. Tilden won the popular vote against Republican Rutherford B. Hayes; however, the electoral results in Florida, Louisiana, and South Carolina were disputed. Both parties were accused of fraud. The debate over the election lasted from November until March of 1877. In January of 1878, Congress created an electoral commission consisting of representatives, senators, and Supreme Court justices, evenly split between Democrats and Republicans. However, allies of candidate Hayes arranged secret meetings with southern Democrats to negotiate. Hayes agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South, ending federal Reconstruction.

In exchange, the Congressional electoral commission ruled in his favor on March 2nd, making him the 19th President of the United States. Hayes was sworn into office March 4th and promptly withdrew all troops from the South. Democrats quickly took power and would dominate southern politics until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. When the National Democratic Party began supporting integration and pro-civil rights policies, many Southern Democrats abandoned the party over the issue and joined the increasingly conservative Republican Party.

## ALABAMA AFTER RECONSTRUCTION

In 1874, the Democratic Party regained control of Alabama and swiftly overturned the Reconstruction era Constitution of 1868. The Constitution of 1875 lowered taxes, reduced government spending, abolished the State Board of Education that was created under Reconstruction and segregated public schools. While the voting rights of freedpeople remained mostly intact thanks to federal oversight, efforts like secret ballots attempted to reduce the Black vote. In an effort to further limit Black voting rights, Alabama's legislature created a new constitution in 1901. The state's 155 delegates were largely members of the Democratic Party and all were white men.

The constitutional convention took place from May 21st to September 3rd. President of the convention, John B. Knox, and the assembled delegates were open about their purpose: to disenfranchise Black voters and restore the white rule in Alabama. The constitution required voters to be male, 21 years old, able to pass literacy tests, employed for at least one year, and property owners. Individuals convicted of any crime, including minor crimes such as vagrancy, were prevented from voting. Moral failings and mental deficiencies were also grounds for disfranchisement. "Grandfather clauses" were written into the constitution to protect the voting rights of poor white Alabamians. For example, white men could register to vote even if they failed the listed requirements as long as they were a veteran, descended from a veteran, or could prove that they understood the U.S. Constitution. However, these exceptions were only in place for a couple of years and annual poll taxes affected both poor Black and poor white Alabamians disenfranchising a huge percentage of potential voters.



Delegates to Alabama's 1901 Constitutional Convention.  
Image: Alabama Department of Archives and History

In addition to voter disenfranchisement, creators of the 1901 constitution sought to impose social restrictions on Black Alabamians. The constitution outlawed interracial marriages and required segregated schools. It also granted the state legislature administrative power over individual counties, removing local home rule.

The 1901 Constitution remains the current constitution of Alabama, although federal law and amendments have nullified many of the discriminatory laws. Still, Alabama's state constitution has often failed to keep pace with federal anti-discrimination laws. The amendment to reverse laws against interracial marriage, for example, wasn't passed until 2000, despite the 1967 Supreme Court ruling that such laws were unconstitutional in *Loving v. Virginia*.

Over the years Alabama needed to add numerous amendments in order to reverse discriminatory legislation. That coupled with additional amendments added by individual counties, makes Alabama's Constitution the world's longest constitutional document. Despite its many amendments, the Alabama Constitution remains contentious, and many condemn it for its discriminatory language. Many attempts have been made to call a new constitutional referendum, but none have as yet resulted in a revised constitution.



# LAST SEEN: REUNITING BLACK FAMILIES AFTER SLAVERY

## Authors:

Dr. John Giggie, Ms. Margaret Lawson,

and the Students from *History of Us: Researching African American History in Tuscaloosa*

Central High School, Tuscaloosa City School System

*History of Us: Researching African American History in Tuscaloosa*, co-directed by Dr. John Giggie and Ms. Margaret Lawson in 2019-2020, was the first year-long Black history course taught daily in a public school in the state of Alabama. Based at Central High School, it attempted to frame national themes of African American history locally and, working with the support of a dozen community partners, to develop students as leaders in the community. When students studied slavery, they researched runaway slaves from Tuscaloosa. When the topic was segregation, they uncovered the lives of eleven local lynching victims and built a digital memorial to them. Students studied mass incarceration and hosted conversations about how the modern prison system impacts daily life in the state. By the year's end, students had become advocates for learning and teaching about race and justice in public schools.

Following students' interest in uncovering history in Tuscaloosa, we worked together to develop the lesson plan included in this guide, "Last Seen: Reuniting Black Families After Slavery." It builds on recent changes in the professional literature on Reconstruction, asking students to document local efforts of formerly enslaved people to build and protect their families following the Civil War. This lesson and the others piloted by the students in *History of Us* challenge us as educators in Alabama and across the country to rethink what's possible for social science education.

## Overview

Inspired by the student researchers in *History of Us: Researching African American History in Tuscaloosa*, this lesson seeks to challenge students to move from being consumers to producers of history. This transformation will involve high-level research tasks, critical thinking, and personal reflection, asking students not only to uncover hidden or forgotten histories but also to think about how this history changes the way they see their community.

Using the Library of Congress's database [Chronicling America](https://www.loc.gov/chroniclingamerica/), students will search for local newspaper notices and advertisements published by Black Americans seeking to reunite with their friends, family, and loved ones after the Civil War. This research is deeply rooted in local history, and the challenge we face as teachers is to ask our students to think about how these stories change our understanding of race, freedom, and family. After securing the documents, students will embed these stories of love and community into American history by donating their research to the [Last Seen Project](https://www.lastseenproject.org/), a national effort to preserve these types of documents.

**Approximate Duration:** Three to four class periods (one to two class periods for guided research, one class period for group presentation and analysis, and one for class discussion).

**Course of Study Standards:** Alabama SS.10.15; Common Core ELA Social Studies

**Common Course ELA Social Studies Standards:** RH.9-10.1,9-10.2; W.9-10.6, 9-10.8; SL.9-10.5

## Learning Objectives

1. Discover local history by conducting high-level primary source research using search terms to navigate *Chronicling America*--an open-access historic newspaper database published by the Library of Congress.
2. Use technology to preserve and publish student research by recording important citation information about their newspaper ads, transcribing their ads, and sharing their work with fellow historians at the *Last Seen* digital humanities project.
3. Identify historical challenges to the formation of black families and freedom after the Civil War and draw connections from the past to the present by discussing as a class what challenges modern families face.

## Materials

### Technology:

- Personal or School Device with Internet Access (For the purpose of conducting research, students ideally should have access to a laptop or desktop computer, although this activity could be adapted for mobile devices such as iPads or smartphones.)

- Projector or Smartboard (For the purpose of having students share their research with the class and facilitating class discussion of specific documents, students should ideally have access to a projector or SmartBoard or be able to print out their documents. These technologies will also help students organize a gallery walk and publicize their findings.)

### Digital Resources:

[Last Seen: Finding Family After Slavery](http://informationwanted.org/), <http://informationwanted.org/>

[Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/), <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/>

## Background Preparation

Before this lesson students should be able to identify:

- the basic chronology of Civil War and Reconstruction
- the freedoms most cherished and sought by formerly enslaved people
- the challenges -- political, economic, and social -- faced by formerly enslaved people to enjoy their new freedoms.

Students and faculty can explore these themes in the Reconstruction Issue Guide published by the David Mathews Center. Students should also be able to conduct basic keyword and subject word searches in public databases.

## Before Strategy / Engage

Before beginning this lesson, instructors should use the David Mathew Center's Reconstruction Issue Guide to study the chronology of the Civil War and Reconstruction, identify the freedoms cherished and sought by formerly enslaved people, and the challenges they faced to protect those freedoms. This guide will provide them and their students with critical background information necessary to begin to shift their focus from studying Reconstruction nationally to studying the history of Reconstruction and its legacies in their own community.

To link the past and the present, instructors can ask a question of this nature: "What do you know about the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction in [insert the name of your community]? As prep for this question, instructors should have a basic grasp of information about the history of slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction in their hometown, city, or county.

After discussing this question, instructors should consult the website for the Last Seen Project and give the students an overview of the lesson for the next few days. Make sure to mention the following:

- Students will be doing the work of professional historians, uncovering the unknown or hidden history of Reconstruction where they live.
- Students will be learning how to research using online databases and analyze their findings as a way to gain a greater understanding of the history that took place in their own backyards.
- Students will become part of a national effort to remember the struggles of Black families during Reconstruction by donating their research to the [Last Seen Project](https://www.lastseenproject.org/), a national effort to preserve and publish this history (<http://informationwanted.org/>)



**Explore / Explain**

To begin the research activity, provide students with a digital or physical copy of the Newspaper Research Guide. This guide is broken down into three main objectives: 1) Creating Search Terms and 2) Searching on the database, and 3) Preserving their Research.

**Step 1:** Using the Search Terms section of the Newspaper Research Guide, work with students to create search terms that will help them find newspapers on the Chronicling America Historic Newspaper Database. (Before class, we recommend doing a few test searches for ads in your area so that you have an idea of what terms students may need to have in order to be successful in their research.)

**Step 2:** Demonstrate how to use the database by incorporating the students' own search terms. Demonstrate as well how students will:

- A. Record their research finds (or "document") using the Citation Table, and
- B. Save a PDF or image file of each document

**Step 3:** Allow students to start their searches. Walk around the room assisting students who are struggling and talking to students about what they are finding.

**Step 4:** Once students have collected two to five ads, recorded citation information for each, and saved a PDF or each, they should transcribe each document using the Transcription Template (right). They should select at least one ad and answer the Research Reflection questions for it.

This section of the lesson plan could take anywhere from 1-2 class periods depending on the student's previous experience with database research and the amount of work students can do outside of class.

**After Strategy / Elaborate**

After completing their newspaper research, transcription, and reflection questions, students should submit all of their research findings to the instructor to be shared with the class by using a project or SmartBoard or by printing out the articles.

Each student should select one or two ads to present to the class. They can organize their presentation by following the research questions as guides. Each ad discussed should either be projected on a whiteboard, or a copy should be made of it and handed out to every member of the class.

After each group has presented their ads for inquiry and analysis, ask the class to collectively reflect on the final research question: "How are aspects of the problems faced by Black people seeking to build and protect their families during Reconstruction still with us today?"

After the group discussion about the ads, the students' final assignment will be to click the link at the bottom of the Research Reflection page to donate their documents to the Last Seen Project's digital archive. When they are donating their research they will need to have access to the citation information, transcriptions, and image files for their research to upload to the website.

**For further information regarding *History of Us: Researching African American History in Tuscaloosa*, contact Dr. John Giggie (jmgiggie@ua.edu)**

**Last Seen Project: Newspaper Research****Goals:**

- Locate and save newspaper ads written by black Americans seeking to reunite with friends, family, and loved ones following the Civil War.
- Preserve important citation information of the ads.

**How to Create Search Terms:**

Respond to the prompts below. List your terms in the table below and show your results to an instructor once you are done.

- The name of the county and/or town you're researching
- The date range for these ads--when would these ads have been published? What was the time period of Reconstruction?
- Key words or phrases commonly used in these ads. For example, "Black," "negro," "lost," "plantation," or "last seen."
- The names of other people, white or black, associated with your search. Once you begin to find newspapers, you can add the names of people listed in the ads to your list of terms to use, often people publish ads across different newspapers or dates.

**Possible Search Terms**


**Database Search**

- 1) Open to *Chronicling America* & click on the "Advanced Search" tab
- 2) Search: using the terms you created conduct a search for newspaper ads related to your hometown or county. Try lots of different combinations of your terms to find results. It might be tricky to find ads at first, but keep trying!
- 3) Instructor Check: For your very first newspaper ad, show it to an instructor.
- 4) Save your Article: For every ad, you must:
  - a) Record information about each article in the Citation Table below.
  - b) Save a PDF of each article.
- 5) Rinse and Repeat: Start locating your articles! Go slowly and take your time!

<b>Who is looking for whom?</b>	<b>Newspaper Name</b>	<b>Publication Place (city, state)</b>	<b>Publication Date (month, day, year)</b>



## Last Seen Project: Newspaper Research (Continued)

### Transcription Template

Instructions: After filling out the Citation Table, use the template below to transcribe the newspaper ads that you found in a separate word document:

Newspaper 1: "Article Title." Publisher, Month Day Year.

Type the copy of your newspaper article below the citation. Make sure to include everything that is printed in your ads. Transcriptions are important because they help make it easier for others to read the newspaper ads.

### Research Reflection

Instructions: Respond to the following guided questions for the ads that you found during your research. After completing the guided questions and discussing your ads as a class, use all of the information you have gathered to donate your research to the *Last Seen Project*.

1. Why were Black people searching for loved ones lost during slavery?
2. How are the lost loved ones described?
3. What do these advertisements tell you about slavery itself?
4. What were the main obstacles faced by Black people seeking loved ones lost during slavery?
5. How are aspects of the problems faced by Black people seeking to build and protect their families during Reconstruction still with us today?

Donate Your Research: The following link allows you to donate your research to the *Last Seen Project*. Make sure that you have easy access to your Citation Table, articles, and transcriptions. You will need them when submitting your research to the site.

[Click Here to Donate your Research](http://informationwanted.org/contribution)  
(<http://informationwanted.org/contribution>)



# GLOSSARY

**Abolitionist** - a person who supported an end to slavery.

**Disenfranchise** - to deprive of a legal right, particularly the right to vote.

**Emancipate** - to free, particularly from enslavement.

**Indigenous** - native to a particular region, in particular people belonging to a people group native to a particular region, such as the Creek people.

**Inhumane** - cruel to people in not caring about their suffering or about the conditions under which they live.

**Literacy Tests** - a test assessing the literacy of a person, especially an eligible voter. Literacy tests have often been administered to disenfranchise voters.

**Oppression** - a situation in which people are governed unfairly and cruelly and prevented from having opportunities and freedom.

**Plantation** - a large farm on which a particular type of crop (such as cotton) is grown. Plantations typically relied on the labor of enslaved people.

**Poll taxes** - a tax of a set amount that must be paid by each adult to vote.

**Punitive** - intended as a punishment.

**Progressive** - believing in moderate political change and especially social improvement by governmental action. During Reconstruction, progressive politicians supported legal changes that extended rights and privileges, especially to formerly enslaved people.

**Reconstruction** - the period after the US Civil War from 1863 to 1877 when the Southern states were readmitted into the Union.

**Society of Quakers** - a Christian group also referred to as the Society of Friends or simply Quakers, that is strongly opposed to violence and war and supports equality of respect for all humans. The group prohibited members of their faith from owning slaves beginning in 1776 and petitioned Congress to abolish slavery in 1790.

**Suffrage** - the right to vote.

**Trafficking** - the act of buying or selling people (often illegally) or of making money from work they are forced to do.

**Veto** - a constitutional right to reject a decision or proposal made by a law-making body. The U.S. Congress can override a Presidential veto with the support of the two-thirds vote in the House and the Senate.

*Definitions adapted from the Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Cambridge Dictionary Online and Oxford English Dictionary Online.*



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