

# The Reconstruction Era



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## Political, Social and Economic Outcomes

In an interview in the 1930s, an elderly African-American looked back on the Civil War and Reconstruction and stated,

*“The first war was ‘bout freedom and the war right after it was [about] equalization.”*

- What does this statement mean?
- To what extent was this true?
- How long did the ‘second war’ last?



# Social Changes (Positives)

**S**AML. DOVE wishes to know of the whereabouts of his mother, Areno, his sisters Maria, Neziah, and Peggy, and his brother Edmond, who were owned by Geo. Dove, of Rockingham county, Shenandoah Valley, Va. Sold in Richmond, after which Saml. and Edmond were taken to Nashville, Tenn., by Joe Mick; Areno was left at the Eagle Tavern, Richmond

Respectfully yours,  
**SAML. DOVE.**

Utica, New York, Aug. 5, 1865-3m

U. S. CHRISTIAN COMMISSION,  
NASHVILLE, TENN., July 19, 1865. }



MARRIAGE OF A COLORED SOLDIER AT VICKSBURG BY CHAPLAIN WARREN OF THE FREEDMEN'S BUREAU.

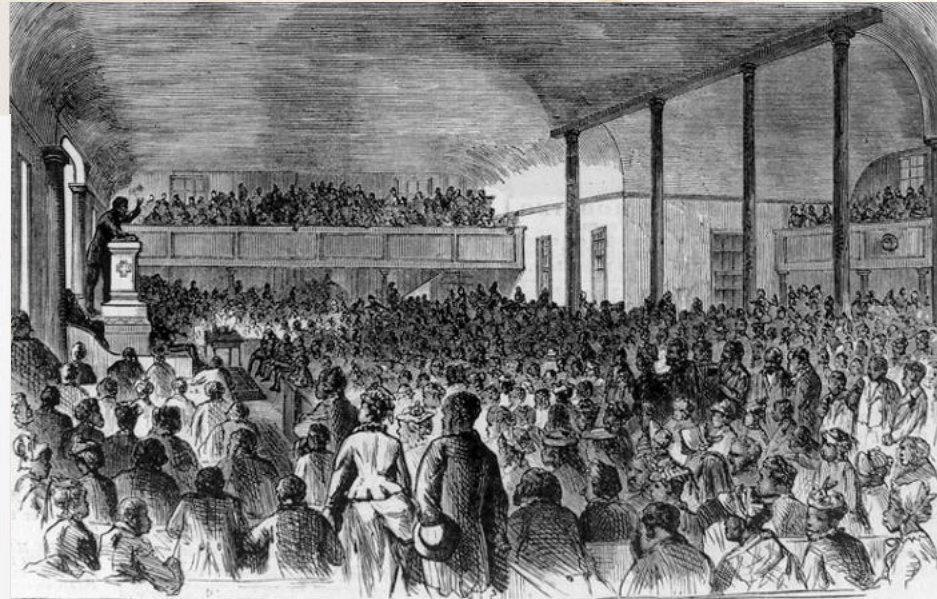
## REV. THOMAS H. JONES,

WHO WAS

### A SLAVE 43 YEARS

IN NORTH CAROLINA,

WILL PREACH IN THIS PLACE, ON



INTERIOR OF THE CHURCH, FROM THE WESTERN WING.



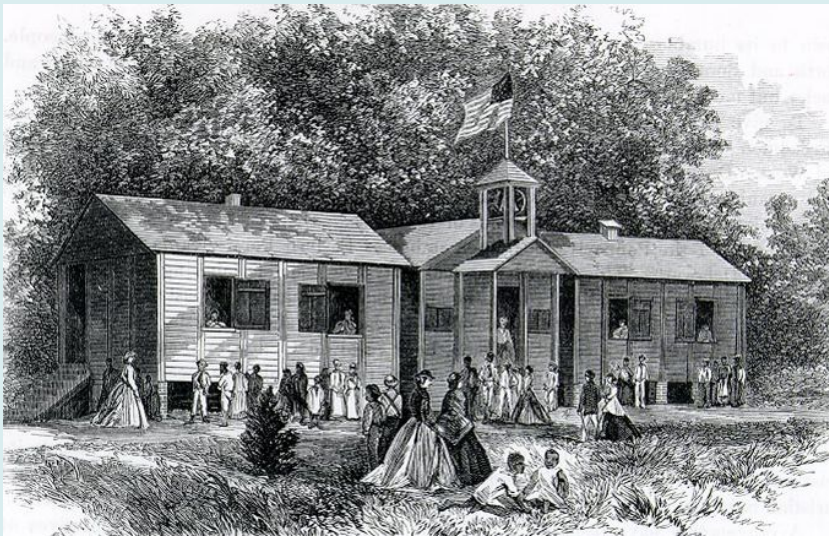
# Social Changes (Positives)



- Once slavery was banned:
  - Many African-Americans sought to legalize marriages (slave marriages were not legally recognized.)
  - Formed churches
  - Former slaves sought out family members from whom they had been separated under slavery. (Difficult b/c records of sales not available, names had been changed, people sold multiple times, etc.)

- Freedmen's Bureau was formed to aid African-Americans in their transition to freedom.
  - Served a number of purposes:
    - Located family members
    - Started schools
    - Acted as an employment agency and negotiated labor contracts
    - Filed legal charges against employers (if necessary)

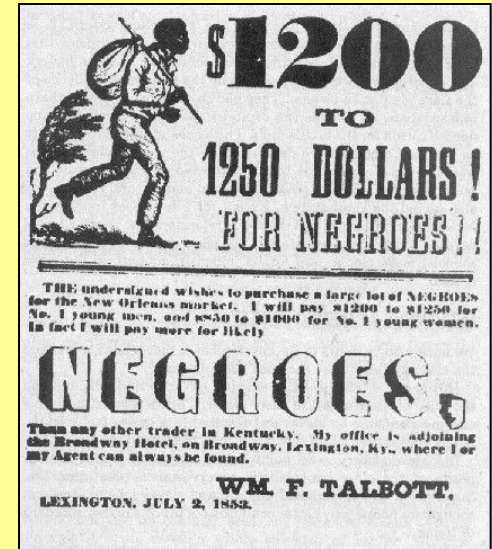
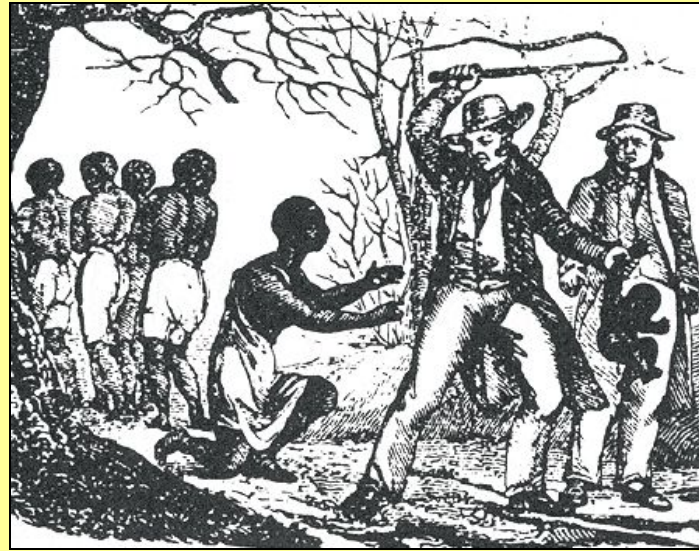
**INFORMATION WANTED**  
OF A MAN BY THE NAME OF ELIAS LOWERY McDERMIT, who used to belong to Thomas Lyons, of Knoxville, East Tennessee. He was sold to a man by the name of Sherman about ten years ago, and I learned some six years ago that he was on a steamboat running between Memphis and New Orleans, and more recently I heard that he was somewhere on the Cumberland river, in the Federal army. Any information concerning him will be thankfully received. Address Colored Tennessean, Nashville, Tenn. From his sister who is now living in Knoxville, East Tennessee.  
je24-1m] MARTHA McDERMIT.





# Political Changes (Positives)

## *Reconstruction Amendments*



- **13<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

**NETFLIX**

# Political Changes (Positives)

## *Reconstruction Amendments*

- **14<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. *No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.*





# Political Changes (Positives)

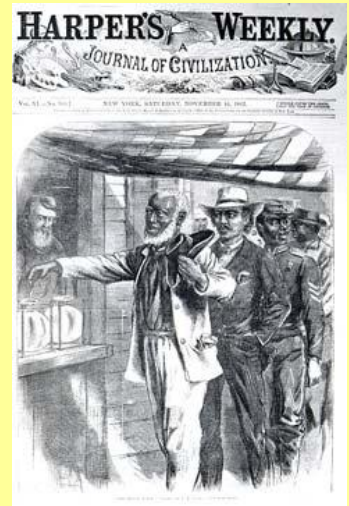
## *Reconstruction Amendments*

- **15<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** 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.





# Political Changes (Positives)



- Once African-American men were given the right to vote, they embraced political participation.
  - More than 70% of eligible black men voted in every state in 1867.
  - Most joined the Republican Party.
- Blacks held office in the South during Reconstruction (0% was small though)
  - Held positions in high state offices, federal & state legislatures, sheriffs, lieutenant governors, etc.
- Achievements while in office:
  - Created system of public education
  - Civil rights legislation
  - Wrote new state constitutions
  - Helped remove restrictions on black workers
  - Repealed Black Codes
  - Improved economic conditions & development (railroads & business)

# Economic Opportunities (Positives)



- Tuskegee Institute

- Booker T. Washington founded an all-black college located in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1881.
  - Washington said black people must first acquire vocational skills and prove to white people that they can make a living before they demand political rights.
- To this end, Tuskegee Institute was dedicated to teaching self-reliance. The education included teacher training, courses in farming and other trades common in the rural South.
- Washington wanted his students to see labor as practical (to earn a living,) but also as dignified.



# Tuskegee

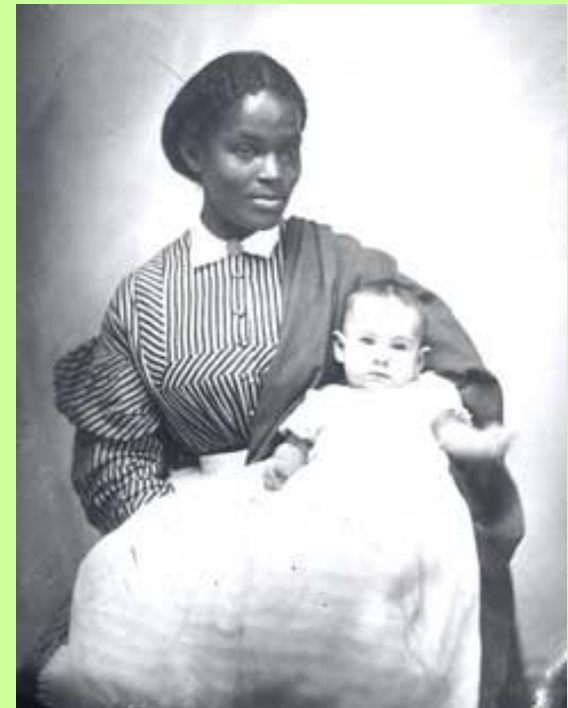
“Many seem to think that industrial education is meant to make the Negro work as he worked in the days of slavery. This is far from my conception of industrial education. If this training is worth anything to the Negro, it consists in teaching him how not to work, but how to make the forces of nature—air, steam, water, horse-power and electricity—work for him. If it has any value it is in lifting labor up out of toil and drudgery into the plane of the dignified and the beautiful. The Negro in the South works and works hard; but too often his ignorance and lack of skill causes him to do his work in the most costly and shiftless manner, and this keeps him near the bottom of the ladder in the economic world.” - Booker T.

Washington

# Economic Changes

## (The Good, the Bad and the Ugly)

- Newly freed slaves needed work to survive. Many former slaves went back to work for former owners (for pay).
- Rise of new economic system:
  - Sharecropping
  - Tenant farming
- Many people (black and white) got stuck in sharecropping/tenancy.
  - Rely entirely on landowner for supplies, food, etc. until crop is ready.
  - Endless cycle of debt.





Game time.



Good luck! 😊

## Sharecropping Contract

To everyone renting land, the following conditions must be agreed to:

For every 30 acres of land (rented by sharecroppers), I will provide a mule team, plow, and farming tools. The sharecroppers can have half of the cotton, corn, peas, pumpkins, and potatoes they grow if the following conditions are followed, but -- if not -- they are to have only two-fifths. For every mule or horse furnished by me there must be 1000 good sized rails (logs) hauled, and the fence repaired if I so direct. All sharecroppers must haul rails (logs) and work on the fence whenever I may order. The wood must be split and the fence repaired before corn is planted. No cotton must be planted by sharecroppers on their home patches of land. No sharecropper is to work off the plantation when there is any work for them to do for me. Every sharecropper must be responsible for all farming gear placed in his hands, and if not returned must be paid for unless it is worn out by use. Nothing can be sold from their (sharecroppers') crops until my rent is all paid, and all amounts they owe me are paid in full. I am to gin & pack all of the cotton and charge every sharecropper an eighteenth of his part, the cropper to furnish his part of the bagging, ties, & twine. The sale of every sharecropper's part of the cotton to be made by me when and where I choose to sell, and after taking all they owe me.



# Pete Seeger, “Seven Cent Cotton and 40 Cent Meat”

- Seven cent cotton an' a forty cent meat  
How in the world can a poor man eat?  
Flour up high and cotton down low  
How in the world can we raise the dough?  
Clothes worn out, shoes run down  
Ol' slouch hat with a hole in the crown  
Back nearly broken and fingers all sore  
Cotton gone down to rise no more
- Seven cent cotton an' eight dollar pants  
Who in the world has got a chance?  
We can't buy clothes, we can't buy meat  
Too much cotton and not enough to eat  
Can't help each other, what'll we do?  
I can't explain it so it's up to you  
Seven cent cotton and two dollar hose  
Guess we'll have to do without any clothes
- Seven cotton an' a forty meat  
How in the world can a poor man eat?  
Mules in the barn no crop laid by  
Corn crib's empty and the cow's gone dry  
Well water low, nearly outta sight  
Can't take a bath on a Saturday night  
No use talkin', any man is beat  
With seven cent cotton an' a forty cent meat
- Seven cent cotton an' a forty cent meat  
How in the world can a poor man eat?  
Poor are gettin' poorer all around here  
Kids comin' regular every year  
Fatten our harvest, take into town  
All we get is six cents a pound  
Very next day we have to buy it back  
Forty cents a pound in a paper sack

*Prices for cotton fell from .25/lb in the 1860s down to .5/lb by the 1890s*



Henry Blake, a former sharecropper said in a 1937 interview,

*“When we worked on shares, we couldn’t make nothing, just overalls and something to eat. Half went to the other man and you would destroy your half if you weren’t careful. A man that didn’t know how to count would always lose. He might lose anyhow. They didn’t give no itemized statement. No, you just had to take their word. They never give you no details. They just say you owe so much. No matter how good account you kept, you had to go by their account and now, Brother, I’m tellin’ you the truth about this. It’s been that way for a long time.”*





# Social Changes (Negative)



- Black Codes: restricted/regulated the civil and legal life of African-Americans. Left African-Americans with few rights.
  - Included restrictions on:
    - Marriage
    - The right to buy and sell property
    - Limited the type of work (Some states required a judge's order for blacks to work outside of agriculture or domestic work.)
    - Not allowed to enter some towns without permission
    - Vagrancy laws



# Social Changes (Negative)

- Rise of the Ku Klux Klan:

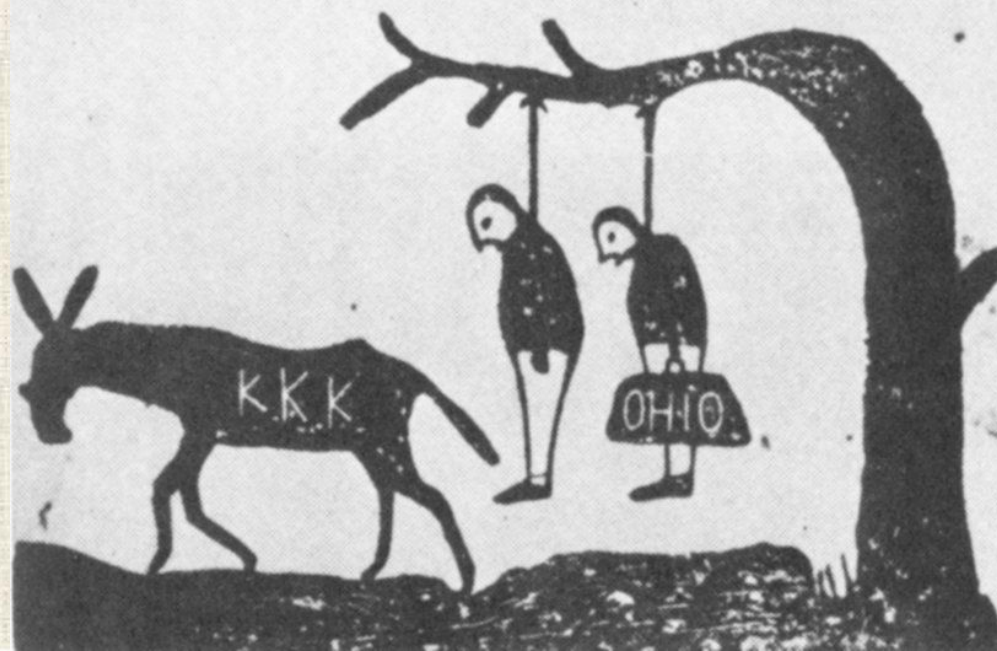
- Started in 1865 in Tennessee as a social club by six Confederate veterans. In the beginning, the Klan was a secret fraternity club rather than a terrorist organization.
- The Klan quickly spread beyond Tennessee to every state in the South and included mayors, judges, and sheriffs as well as common criminals.
- **Goals:** ?
- While the main **targets** of Klan wrath were the political and social leaders of the black community, blacks could be murdered for almost any reason.
- **Tactics:** The Klan systematically murdered black politicians and political leaders. It beat, whipped, and murdered thousands, and intimidated tens of thousands of others from voting. Blacks often tried to fight back, but they were outnumbered and outgunned.
- Klan activity ended by 1872 (WHY?) and disappeared until it was revived again in 1915.







A PROSPECTIVE SCENE IN THE CITY OF OAKS, 4TH OF MARCH, 1920.



# KLAN PLANS TO BECOME ACTIVE

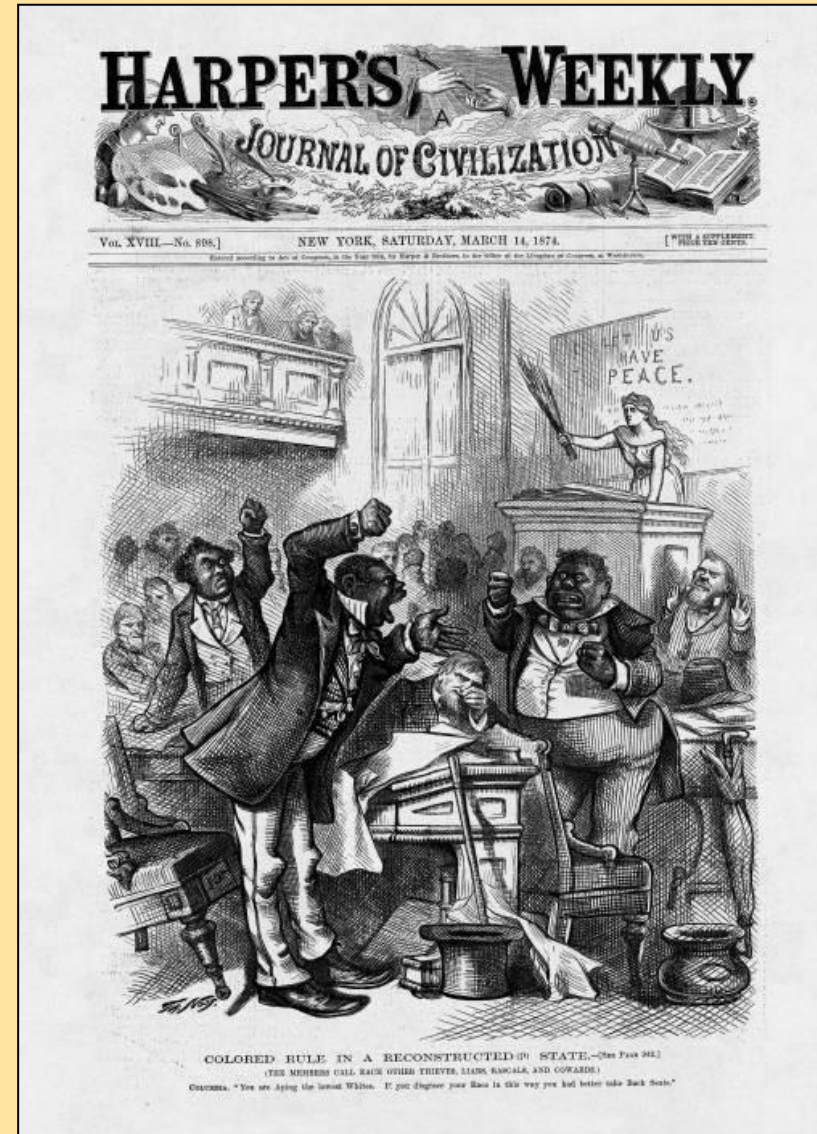
Representatives Suggest  
Possibility of Sending  
Horsemen Thru Streets.

That the powerful and rapidly growing organization known as the Ku Klux Klan is contemplating an active, open campaign for members in Auburn was revealed Wednesday when representatives of the Klan appeared at the city hall seeking information relative to restrictions on street demonstrations.

W. K. Romans of Auburn, accompanied by an official of the Seattle branch of the Klan or-

# White Response to African-Americans' Freedom – Political Changes (Negative)

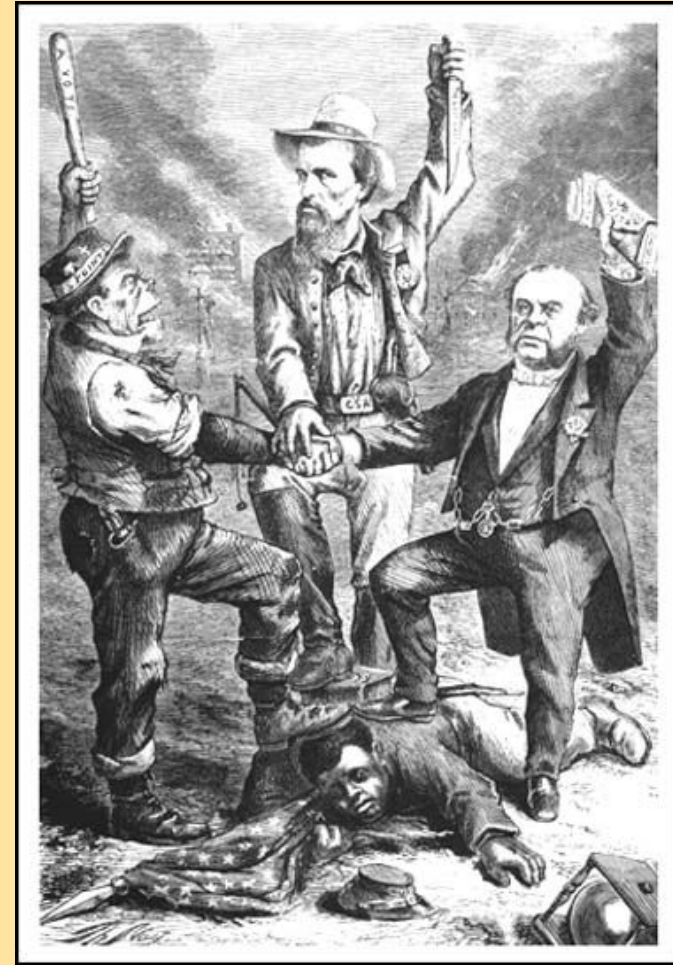
- White southern criticism of African-Americans in government:
  - Corrupt and incompetent
  - Uneducated (70% African-Americans could not read or write in 1880 vs. 10% of all whites)
  - Ineffective
    - Whites were angry with higher taxes & rising state debt
    - Saw little improvement in economic conditions at the same time as cotton prices dropped. (South never regained glory of pre-Civil War Era.)





# Political Changes (Negative)

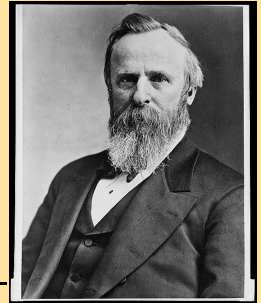
- Meanwhile, white southerners figured out ways to stop blacks from voting.
  - By 1890, black people ceased to vote in the South
  - Because of the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment, states cannot ban voting on the basis of race. They must find other reasons to disqualify African-Americans.
  - States come up with creative ways to exclude blacks from voting:
    - Grandfather clause
    - Literacy tests
    - Poll tax
    - 8-box system
- In *Williams v. Mississippi*, the Supreme Court agreed that southern means of voter restriction were constitutional (as voting requirements were left up to the states)





# The Failure of Reconstruction – Political Failures

- Radical Republicans almost lost national power in the 1872 election. Thereafter, they abandoned the principles of equality for all in the interest of focusing on winning elections.
- Presidential Election of 1876:
  - Rutherford B. Hayes (Rep.)
  - Samuel Tilden (Dem.)
- Hayes lost the popular vote. Problem with electoral votes – claim to have won. Congressional committee set up to investigate.
  - Mostly made up of Republicans.
  - Committee said that Hayes won. Democrats rejected the decision.
- Compromise of 1877: if the Democrats agreed to allow Hayes to become president, he promised to remove all federal troops from the South and to allow the South to control themselves.
  - WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR RECONSTRUCTION IN THE SOUTH?



# South after the Compromise of 1877

- In a series of acts, the Supreme Court dealt a blow to black rights:
  - Declared the Civil Rights Act of 1875 illegal
    - The Civil Rights Act had guaranteed the “equality of all men before the law” and banned racial discrimination in public places and facilities like restaurants and public transportation. The law also made it a crime to deny accommodations or services on the basis of color, race, or previous condition of servitude.
  - The Supreme Court said the act was unconstitutional because it placed controls on private citizens/businesses
- Plessy v. Ferguson (1896): Homer Plessy attempted to challenge segregation laws on the railroads.
  - Supreme Court ruled that it was legal to separate the races. “Separate but equal” facilities are constitutional.
  - Gives the green light to pass more Jim Crow laws.





# Social Conditions in the Post-Reconstruction Era (Negative)



- Rise of Jim Crow: A rigid system of segregation that covered all areas of life in the South.







## Social Conditions (Negative)

- In the 1880s-1890s, roughly 100 black people were lynched each year.
  - DEFINITION: to put someone to death for an alleged offense by mob action without legal process or authority
  - Hanging was most common form of lynching.
  - Most common reason was rape of a white woman. (Other reasons included murder and theft.)

loading . .









“All social classes, women and children, were present at the scene. Many ladies of high society followed the crowd from outside the prison, others joined in from neighbouring terraces. When the Negro's corpse fell, the pieces of rope were hotly contended for.”

*Vicksburg Evening Post* (4th May, 1919)







# “Strange Fruit”

by Billie Holiday & Abel Meeropol (1937)

Southern trees bear strange fruit,  
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,  
Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze,  
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

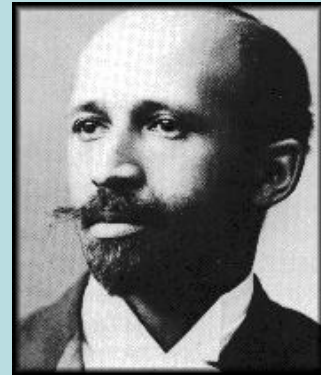
Pastoral scene of the gallant south,  
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,  
Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh,  
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh.

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,  
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,  
For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop,  
Here is a strange and bitter crop.



In the post-Reconstruction Era, a number of African-Americans emerged to speak out against the abuse of African-Americans.

- Booker T. Washington was just one voice.
- W.E.B. Du Bois was another
  - 1<sup>st</sup> black person to get a PhD (Harvard)
  - Believed that black people had waited long enough for freedom and should fight for their rights. Argued for the existence of the “talented tenth” – a group of educated African-Americans who would then be responsible for the education and elevation of the race.
  - Helped start the Niagara Movement (1905), which later became the NAACP (1910.) They met at Niagara Falls, on the Canadian side because no hotels on the American side would allow an integrated group to meet.
    - Sought economic opportunity, integration, equality before the law.



## “Booker T. and W.E.B.” (by Dudley Randall)

"It seems to me," said Booker T.,  
"It shows a mighty lot of cheek  
To study chemistry and Greek  
When Mr. Charlie needs a hand  
To hoe the cotton on his land,  
And when Miss Ann looks for a cook  
Why stick your nose inside a book?"

"I don't agree," said W.E.B.,  
"If I should have the drive to seek  
Knowledge of chemistry or Greek,  
I'll do it. Charles and Miss can look  
Another place for hand or cook.  
Some men rejoice in skill of hand,  
And some in cultivating land,  
But there are others who maintain  
The right to cultivate the brain."

"It seems to me," said Booker T.,  
"That all you folks have missed the boat  
Who shout about the right to vote  
And spend vain days and fruitless nights  
In uproar over civil rights.  
Just keep your mouths shut, do not grouse,  
But work, and save, and buy a house."

"I don't agree," said W.E.B.  
"For what can property avail  
If dignity and justice fail?  
Unless you help to make the laws,  
They'll steal your house on a trumped-up clause.  
A rope's as tight, a fire as hot  
No matter how much cash you've got.  
Speak soft and try your little plan.  
But as for me, I'll be a man."

"It seems to me," said Booker.T. —

"I don't agree," said W.E.B.



# Anti-Lynching Campaign



- Ida B. Wells – social reformer, writer
  - Forced to leave the U.S. because of threats on her life.
  - Toured Europe making speeches to call attention to the plight of African-Americans.
  - Pushed for federal anti-lynching legislation – was unsuccessful.
- Arthur Raper, *Southern Commission on the Study of Lynching* (1933)
  - “3,724 people were lynched in the United States from 1889 through to 1930. Over four-fifths of these were Negroes, less than one-sixth of whom were accused of rape. Practically all of the lynchers were native whites. The fact that a number of the victims were tortured, mutilated, dragged, or burned suggests the presence of sadistic tendencies among the lynchers. Of the tens of thousands of lynchers and onlookers, only 49 were indicted and only 4 have been sentenced.”

# “What About Me: In Response to the Distinguished Gentlemen” (by Gerald Gill)

“What About Me,” said Ida B.  
Each of you talks about your plan,  
but all you do is talk man-to-man.  
You don’t give note to all the race,  
as if we women are to stay in place.  
You want us to show motherly care,  
stay out of men’s work, if we dare.

“What About Me,” said Ida B.  
I’ve been active throughout my life,  
doing more than being Ferdinand’s wife.  
I’ve taken stands against segregation,  
I support all types of education.  
I wrote lynching’s a horrible crime  
while the two of you bided your time.

“What About Me,” said Ida B.  
I’ve worked with people from all races,  
though some say I lack social graces.  
I don’t grovel or lower my head,  
I work for justice and rights instead.  
If I upset people, that’s my cross to bear,  
I only want for our people what’s just and fair.

“What About Me,” said Ida B.  
Like the two of you, I take my stand,  
there are multiple ways to the Promised Land,  
By economics, civil rights, and the vote,  
with suffrage for women and men, please note.  
I don’t see the need to compromise,  
I don’t simply lead, I organize.

“What About Me,” said Ida B.



“Negro suffrage ended a civil war by beginning a race feud.”

» W.E.B. Du Bois (*Souls of Black Folks*, 1903)

- What did Du Bois mean?
- Do you agree with his view? Why or why not?



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