

## **DBQ SOUTH'S RECONSTRUCTION: FAILURE OR SUCCESS?**

### **HISTORICAL CONTEXT:**

After the Civil War the nation had about four million newly freed slaves. The victorious Union was faced with the extraordinary task of protecting the new freedmen's rights of citizenship. First, the former Confederacy was divided into five military districts. Then amendments were passed to protect freed people's natural rights. Southern states were not pleased, and made compromises were in order to rid themselves of these "military dictatorships."

By 1870, all of the former Confederate states had ratified these amendments and were readmitted into the Union. Reconstruction ended in 1877 with the removal of Union troops from Confederate territory. After Southern state governments were restored, the citizenship rights of the freedmen declined. Soon these former slaves were once again in servitude; this time through a system of state-enforced segregation and discrimination.

### **QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:**

1. Why is the South's Reconstruction considered a success? A failure?
2. To what extent did Reconstruction bring the Southern Negro the equality and freedom that slavery had denied them?

Examine each document carefully and answer the question or questions that follow. Each document relates to Reconstruction's failure to protect the rights of newly freed slaves.

#### **DOCUMENT 1:**

The Thirteenth Amendment

Section 1. neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment of a crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist in the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.

Section 2. Congress shall have the power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

1. *What does this Amendment guarantee and for whom?*
2. *What does Congress have the right to do in order to enforce this law?*

#### **DOCUMENT 2:**

The Fourteenth 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 any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.

3. *What does this Amendment guarantee?*

4. *For whom?*

**DOCUMENT 3:**

The Fifteenth Amendment

Section 1. 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.

Section 2 The Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

5. *Who is not protected by this amendment?*

**DOCUMENT 4:**

"The Freedman's Bureau" political cartoon

"THE FREEDMAN'S BUREAU! AN AGENCY TO KEEP THE NEGRO IN IDLENESS AT THE EXPENSE OF THE WHITE MAN. TWICE VETOED BY THE PRESIDENT, AND MADE A LAW BY CONGRESS. SUPPORT CONGRESS & YOU SUPPORT THE NEGRO. SUSTAIN THE PRESIDENT & YOU PROTECT THE WHITE MAN."



"One in a series of racist posters attacking Radical Republicans on the issue of black suffrage, issued during the Pennsylvania gubernatorial election of 1866. (See also "The Constitutional Amendment!," no. 1866-5.) The series advocates the election of Hiester Clymer, who ran for governor on a white-supremacy platform, supporting President Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction policies. In this poster a black man

lounges idly in the foreground as one white man ploughs his field and another chops wood. Accompanying labels are: 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread,' and 'The white man must work to keep his children and pay his taxes.'" -- HarpWeek

**6. What is this cartoon suggesting?**

**7. How do you think this message reflects the views of Southern Democrats in the South, and how might these attitudes affect the progress of Freedmen?**

### **DOCUMENT 5:**

Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896

"...The object of the Fourteenth Amendment was undoubtedly to enforce the absolute equality of the two races before the law, but by the nature of things it could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based upon color, or to enforce social, as distinguished from political equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either.....

We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority....The argument necessarily assumes that if,...the colored race should become the dominant power in the state legislature, and should enact a law in precisely similar terms, it would thereby relegate the white race to an inferior position.....

The argument also assumes that social prejudices may be overcome by legislation, and that equal rights cannot be secured to the Negro except by an enforced commingling of the two races. We cannot accept this proposition. If the two races are to meet upon terms of social equality, it must be the result of natural affinities, a mutual appreciation of each other's merits and a voluntary consent of individuals...Legislation is powerless to eradicate racial instincts or to abolish distinctions based upon physical differences, and the attempt to do so can only result in accentuating the difficulties of the present situation. If the civil and political rights of both races be equal one cannot be inferior to the other civilly or politically. If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane."

For over 50 years, the states of the American South enforced a policy of separate accommodations for blacks and whites on buses and trains, and in hotels, theaters, and schools. On May 18, 1896, the Supreme Court ruled in the Plessy v. Ferguson law case that separate-but-equal facilities on trains were constitutional.

**8. What was the impact of Plessy v. Ferguson beyond its effects on train passengers?**

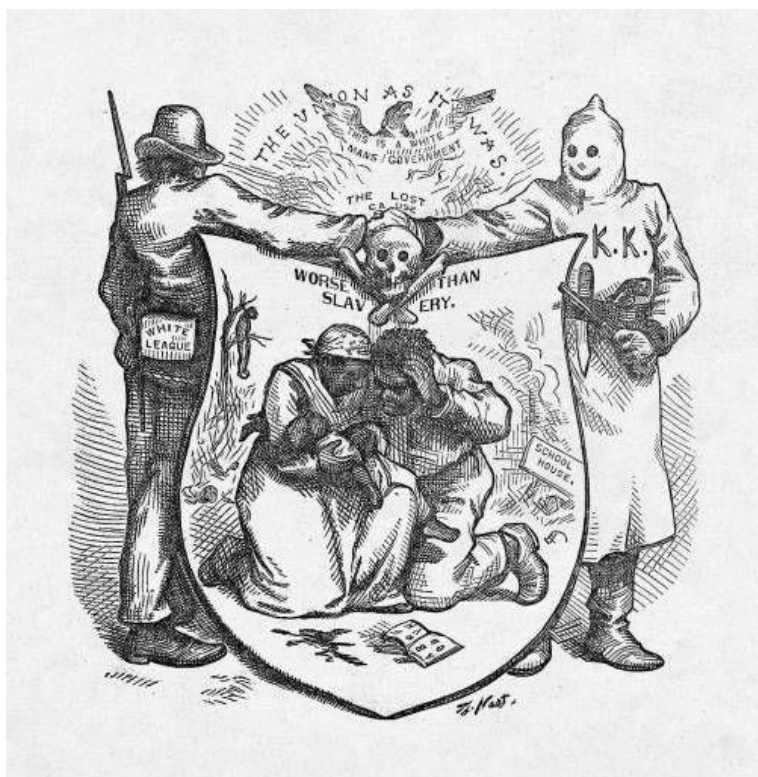
### **DOCUMENT 6:**

W.E.B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America

"But the decisive influence was the systematic and overwhelming economic pressure. Negroes who wanted work must not dabble in politics. Negroes who wanted to increase their income must not agitate the Negro problem. . . in order to earn a living, the American Negro was compelled to give up his political power." -- Dr. W.E.B. DuBois, Black Reconstruction in America.

**9. According to DuBois, why did freedmen stop voting?**

**DOCUMENT 7:**  
"Worse than Slavery"



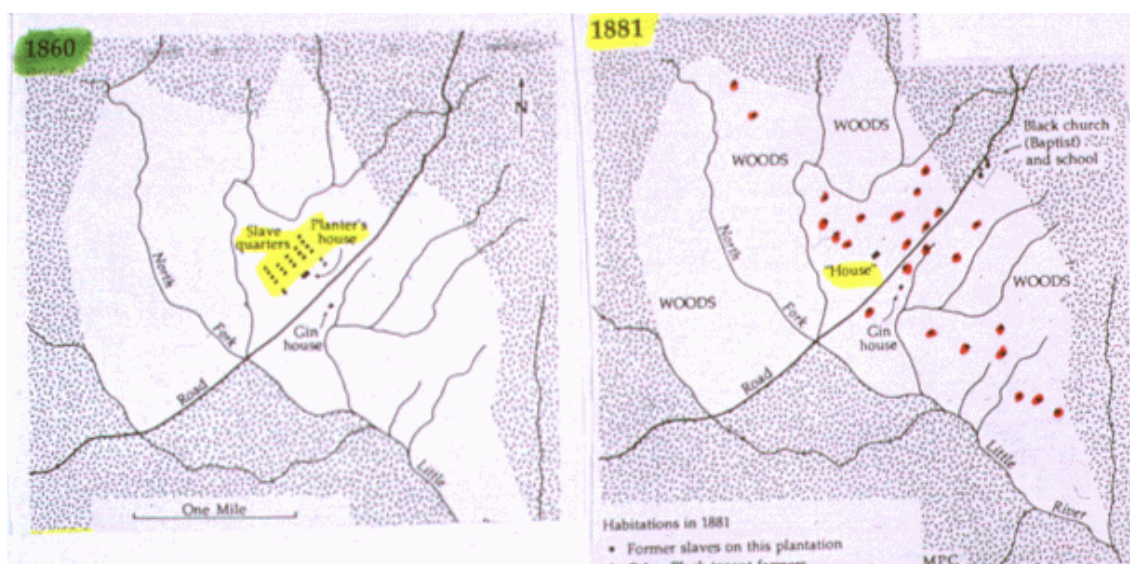
10. Based on the image above, what was the purpose of the Ku Klux Klan?

11. How did the Ku Klux Klan help to undermine Congress's efforts to protect freed people's equal rights?

**DOCUMENT 8:**  
Sharecropping maps

"Sharecropping was very distinctive to the South after the Civil War until the 1940s. As late as 1936, about 60 percent of plantations were organized into sharecropper units."

--Ingolf Vogeler



12. Based on the document above, what has changed on the plantation land since the War between the States?

13. Based on the document above and your knowledge of U.S. history, what was the real end result of sharecropping?

**DOCUMENT 9:**

Susie Taylor King: Reminiscences of My Life

Living here in Boston where the black man is given equal justice, I must say a word on the general treatment of my race, both in the North and South, in this twentieth century. I wonder if our white fellow men realize the true sense or meaning of brotherhood? For two hundred years we had toiled for them; the war of 1861 came and was ended, and we thought our race was forever freed from bondage, and that the two races could live in unity with each other, but when we read almost every day of what is being done to my race by some whites in the South, I sometimes ask, "Was the war in vain? Has it brought freedom, in the full sense of the word, or has it not made our condition more hopeless?"

In this "land of the free" we are burned, tortured, and denied a fair trial, murdered for any imaginary wrong conceived in the brain of the negro-hating white man. There is no redress for us from a government which promised to protect all under its flag. It seems a mystery to me. They say, "One flag, one nation, one country indivisible." Is this true? Can we say this truthfully, when one race is allowed to burn, hang, and inflict the most horrible torture weekly, monthly, on another? No, we cannot sing, "My country, 't is of thee, Sweet land of Liberty"! It is hollow mockery. The Southland laws are all on the side of the white, and they do just as they like to the negro, whether in the right or not. --**Susie Taylor King**

**14. How does this excerpt from Susie Taylor King's memoir suggest that black Americans are still not free?**

**DOCUMENT 10:**

The Election of 1876

Election results:

Candidate (party)	Popular vote (7 Nov 1876)	Electoral vote (6 Dec 1876)
Rutherford B. Hayes (Republican)	4,034,311	185 <sup>2</sup>
Samuel J. Tilden (Democratic)	4,288,546	184
Peter Cooper (Greenback)	75,973	0
other	14,271	0

**15. How was it possible that Hayes won the election of 1876?**

**16. How did this disputed election lead to the end of Reconstruction? Explain.**

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS:**

**17. In what ways do the following documents support that Reconstruction was a Success?**

**18. In what ways do the following documents support that Reconstruction was a Failure?**

## **DOCUMENT 11**

The Civil Rights Act. March 1, 1875.

Whereas it is essential to just government we recognize the equality of all men before the law, and hold that it is the duty of government in its dealings with the people to mete out equal and exact justice to all, of whatever nativity, race, color, or persuasion, religious or political....

That all persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of public amusement...

## **DOCUMENT 12**

Atlanta News, "Meet Brute Forces With Brute Forces," September 10, 1874.

“Let there be White Leagues formed in every town, village and hamlet of the South, and let us organize for the great struggle which seems inevitable We have no war to make against the United States Government, but against the republican party our hate must be unquenchable, our war indeterminable and merciless. Fast fleeting away is the day of wordy protests and idle appeals to the magnanimity of the republican party. By brute force they are endeavoring to force us into acquiescence to their hideous program. We have submitted long enough to indignities, and it is time to meet brute-force with brute-force. Every Southern State should swarm with White Leagues, and we should stand ready to act the moment Grant signs the civil-rights bill. It will not do to wait till radicalism has fettered us to the car of social equality before we make an effort to resist it. The signing of the bill will be a declaration of war against the southern whites. It is our duty to ourselves, it is our duty to our children, it is our duty to the white race whose prowess subdued the wilderness of this continent, whose civilization filled it with cities and towns and villages...to let northern radicals understand that military supervision of southern elections and the civil-rights bill mean war, and that war means bloodshed, and that we are terribly in earnest, and even they, fanatical as they are, may retrace their steps before it is too late.”

## **DOCUMENT 13**

Slaughterhouse Cases, 1873.

The language is, "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States." IF the privileges and immunities of the citizen of the United States, and of the privileges and immunities of the citizen of the State, and what they respectively are, we will presently consider; but we wish to state here that it is only the former which are placed by this clause under the protection of the federal Constitution, and that the latter, whatever they may be, are not intended to have any additional protection by this paragraph of the amendment....

Was it the purpose of the Fourteenth Amendment, by the simple declaration that no State should make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges and immunities of citizens of the United States, to transfer the security and protection of all the civil rights which we have mentioned, from the States to the federal government? And where is it declared that Congress shall have the power to enforce that article, was it intended to bring within the power of Congress the entire domain of civil rights heretofore belonging exclusively to the States?

## **DOCUMENT 14**

Civil Rights Cases, 1883.

When a man has emerged from slavery, and by the aid of beneficial legislation has shaken off the inseparable concomitants of that state, there must be some stage in the progress of his elevation when he takes the rank of a mere citizen, and ceases to be the special favorite of the laws, and when his rights as a citizen, or man, are to be protected in the ordinary modes by which other men's rights are protected. There were thousands of free colored people in this country before the abolition of slavery, enjoying all the essential rights of life, liberty and property the same as white citizens; yet no one, at that time, thought that it was any invasion of his personal status as a freedman because he was not admitted to all the privileges enjoyed by white citizens, or because he was subjected to discriminations in the enjoyment of accommodations in inns, public conveyances and places of amusement. Mere discriminations on account of race or color were not regarded as badges of slavery. If, since that time, the enjoyment of equal rights in all these respects has become established by constitutional enactment, it is not by force of the Thirteenth Amendment (which merely abolishes slavery), but by force of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. On the whole we are of the opinion that no countenance of authority for the passage of the law in question can be found in either the Thirteenth or Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution.....

### **DOCUMENT 15**

(Story of Jane Sutton, former slave) "Been In the Storm So Long," by Leon F. Litwack.

The close relationships that sometimes developed between slave Warren and the white mistress could be even more psychologically damaging than separation by sale. Where a master or mistress made "pets" out of certain favorites, indulging them in ways their parents could not, a conflict of loyalties became highly possible. Jane Sutton, a former Mississippi slave, contrasted her master who provided the blacks with "plenty t'eat an' wear" and gave the children candy and presents when he returned from town, with her father, who belonged to a neighboring planter and visited on weekends. "He jus' come on Satu'd'y night an' us don' see much of 'him. Us call him 'cat man.' Mammy tol' us to be more 'spectful to 'im 'cause he was us daddy, but us sent care nothin' 'bout 'im. He sent never brung us no candy or nothin'." Rather than live with her father after emancipation, Jane ran away and returned to the old plantation.

### **DOCUMENT 16**

(Account of the treatment of the free Negro) "Been In the Storm So Long," by Leon F. Litwack.

Corrie Calhoun says that where she lives, about thirty miles from here, over in Carolina, the men have a recipe for putting troublesome Negroes out of the way that the Yankees can't get the key to. No two go out together, no one lets another know what he is going to do, and so, when mischievous Negroes are found dead in the woods, nobody knows who killed them

### **DOCUMENT 17**

(Excerpt from a notion that the government was not protecting the freedmen)  
"Been In the Storm SO Long," by Leon F. Litwack.

If the postwar riots and violence were intended to teach the freedman "not to arouse the fury of the white man," they taught him that and considerably more. Law enforcement agencies and officers, if not co-conspirators in violating the civil rights of ex-slaves, might be expected to protect or ignore the violators. Neither the Union Army nor the Freedmen's Bureau could be trusted to afford them the adequate protection;

instead, Union troops in some localities allied with native whites as the principal aggressors. To seek a redress of grievances in the courts of law, as many freedmen also quickly discovered, resulted invariably in futility if not personal danger.