

# Life after Slavery

**Background:** After slaves were freed with the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, former slaves needed a lot of basic necessities: Food, shelter, clothing, and a way to earn a living. Former slavers also wanted an education.

**(1) Freedman's Bureau:** In March of 1865 (Lincoln was still president), Congress set up the Freedmen's Bureau to help former slaves. The bureau provided food, clothing, and medical care, and helped former slaves arrange for work with plantation owners (many former slaves became sharecroppers). Most importantly, the bureau built schools for former slaves.

**(2) Sharecropping:** In this system, a person farmed the landowners land and paid a share of the harvest for the rent. In order to sharecrop, the sharecropper had to purchase seed, tools, food, and a house to live in from the former plantation owners. The owner of the land always made sure to charge more for supplies than the sharecropper could pay back with crops so the sharecropper could never leave because he/she would always be in debt to the land owner.

**(3) 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment:** Leaders in Congress worried that African Americans were losing their legal rights. In 1869, Congress passed the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which said that the rights of a person to vote could not be denied "on account of race, color, or previous conditions of servitude."

**(4) Reconstruction Ends:** (Compromise of 1877): By the end of the 1870's, many Northerners were tired of Reconstruction. The nation's economy was not doing well. People were worried about having jobs and earning money to live. They turned away from the problems of African Americans.

- **Election of 1876:** Republican Rutherford B. Hayes vs. Democrat Samuel Tilden. There wasn't a clear winner in the election so the decision came down to Congress. The victory was given to Rutherford B. Hayes because he agreed to pull all of the Federal Troops out of the South, officially ending Reconstruction. As soon as the troops pulled out, life for African Americans was about to change. New laws would be passed in the South known as **Jim Crow Laws**.

**(5) Jim Crow Laws:** Discriminated against African Americans in all parts of their lives. These laws dealt with segregation (Separation of people by race). Ex: separate schools, restrooms, restaurants, etc... In 1896, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court said "**separate but equal**" was constitutional. In reality, **they were separate, but very unequal**.

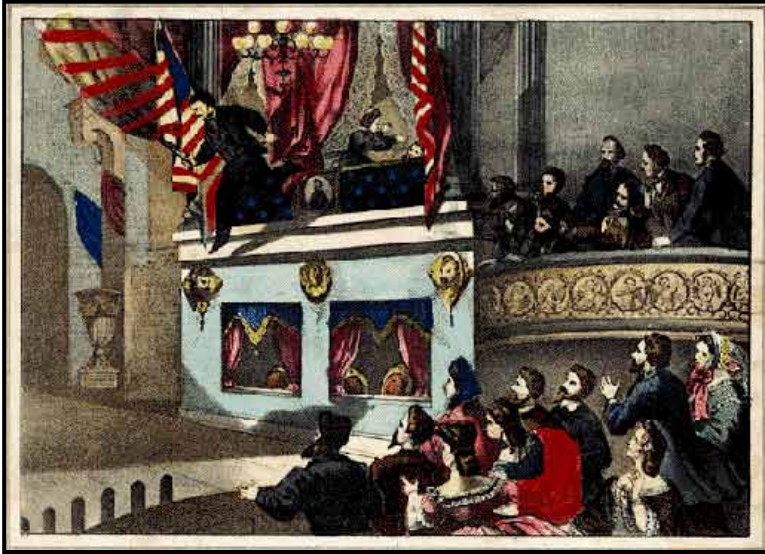
Examples of other laws passed in the South under the Jim Crow Laws.

- **Poll Tax:** A voter had to pay a tax to vote.
- **Literacy Test:** A voter had to be able to read and write. White officials decided who could read and write.
- **Grandfather Clause:** No man could vote if his grandfather had not been able to vote before the Civil War.

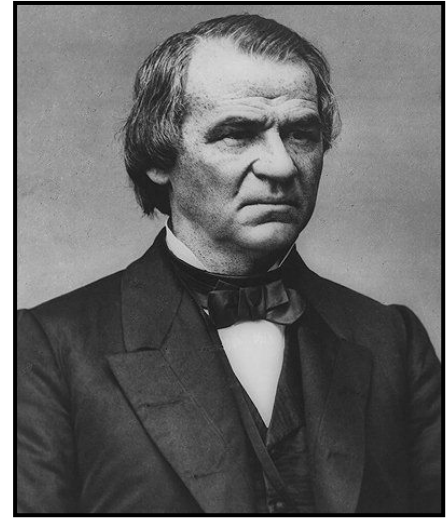
Directions: You are all going to create a photo essay on the 5 topics on the opposite side of the page.

Photo Essay: Students will look for pictures that show the different topics related to African Americans after the Civil War. Underneath each picture, students will write a short explanation that explains what is happening in the photo.

Below is an example of what your photo essay should look like if your topic was the assassination of Abraham Lincoln.



Above: John Wilkes Booth jumping off the balcony after he assassinated President Abraham Lincoln.



Above: Andrew Johnson. He became the new president after Lincoln was killed. Johnson was from Tennessee. It was now his job to help reconstruct the Union.



Left: President Lincoln's funeral.

Here are your topics: Freedmen's Bureau, Sharecropping, 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, Reconstruction Ends, and Jim Crow Laws. Try to make sure you find pictures that best relate to the topic. You will present your photo essay to the class. Just make sure you give a good explanation of your photo. Your explanations will be a little longer than the examples. Good luck.