

# Impacts and Effects of Reconstruction in Texas



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## Lesson Overview

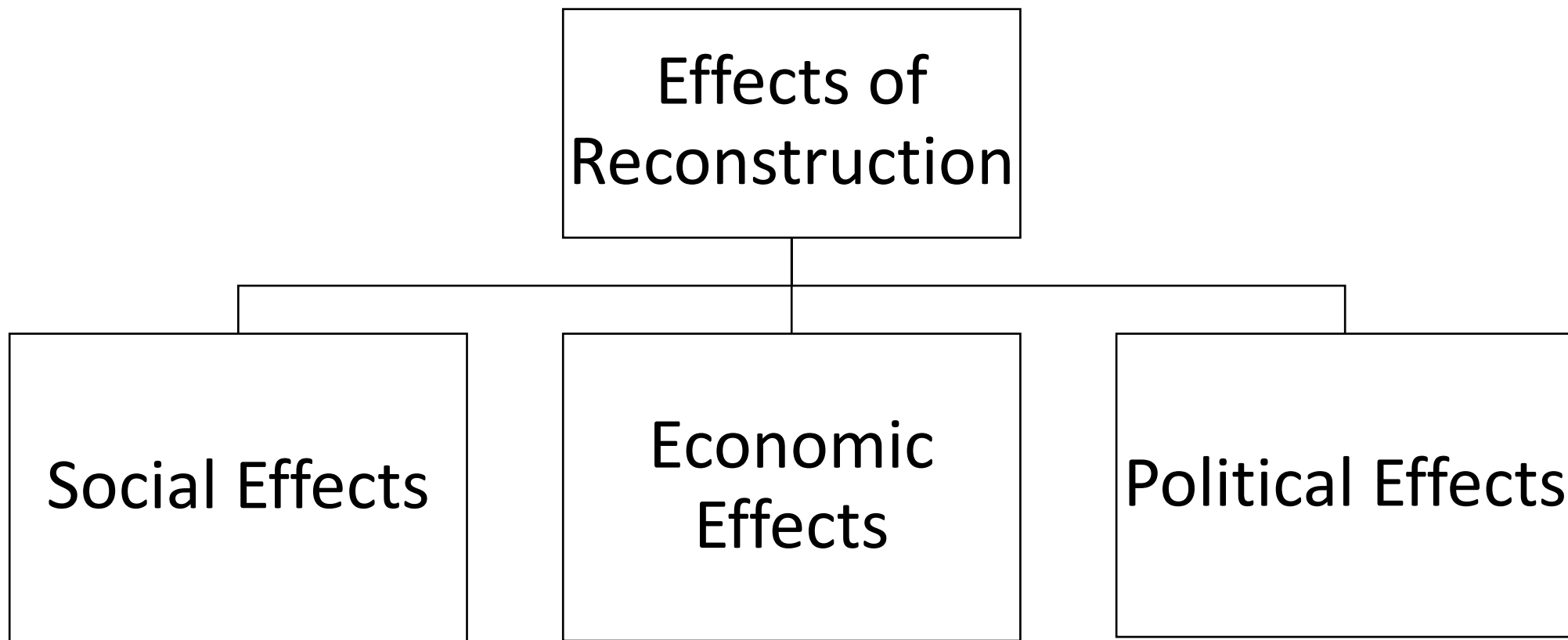
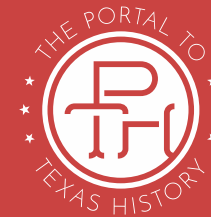
Reconstruction officially ended in 1870 but the state of Texas was impacted for many years following due to economic policies, public reaction, and the legacy of Reconstruction politics. In this lesson, students will study the impacts and effects that Reconstruction had on Texas including:

- Education
- Sharecropping and Tenant Farming
- Rebuilding the Texas Economy
- Convict Lease System
- Democrats Take Control of Texas
- Resistance and Repression

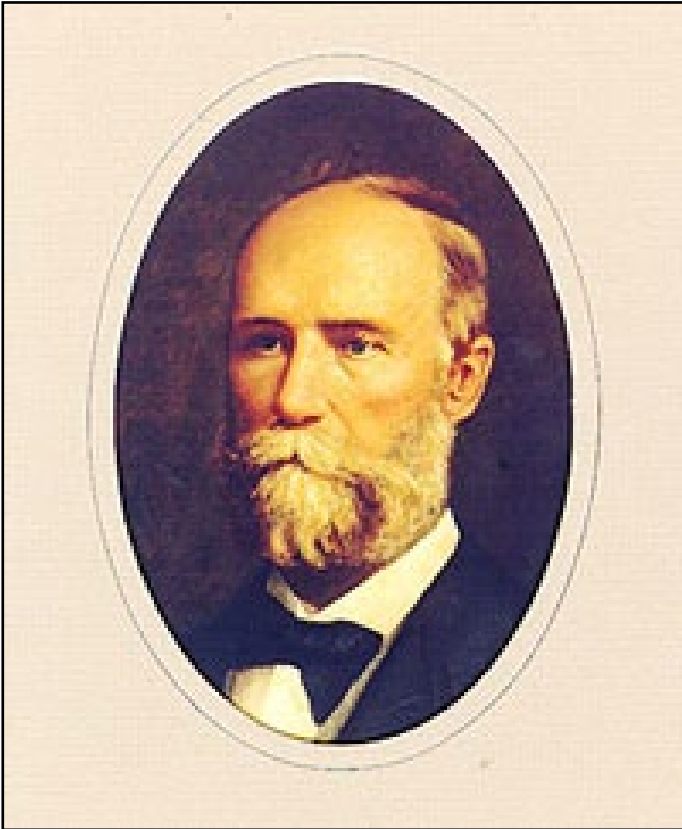
# Essential Questions:

1. How did economic practices of Reconstruction impact Texans, including the newly freed African Americans?
2. In what ways did forced labor continue in Texas following Reconstruction?
3. How did Texans embrace or resist changes in the state resulting from Reconstruction?

# Texas Following Reconstruction



# Governor Davis in Office [1870]



Governor Edmund Davis won the election of 1869 and assumed office in 1870. During his term he re-enforced Radical Republican ideals and practices of Reconstruction.

While in office, Davis also worked to increase his powers as governor and to strengthen the Republican party. He increased the state police force and increased taxes to fund new policies.

The 12th Texas Legislature, which was predominantly Republican (1870-71), focused efforts on three major issues:

- Economic development
- Settlement and Immigration
- Education

# Two Schools



## Think-Pair-Share

Using the guided questions, analyze the primary source images to answer the document analysis questions.

*Support your claims using evidence.*

## Document Analysis Questions:

1. Based on the images, what are some main observances?
2. What can you infer about the role of education during this period?
3. Drawing conclusions: What can you conclude about the social relations of Texans during this time period, based on the image?

# Education in Texas [1870 -1900]

Many of the 52 African Americans in the Texas legislature before 1900 advocated for the development of free public schools for all Texans. They believed that schools would be free to all children; both white and black.

Governor Davis established the first state public school system in 1871, which supported education for African Americans.

Unfortunately, the first public school system in Texas failed partially due to high taxation, compulsory attendance - children were required to attend, and educating African Americans.

During this period, representatives were able to promote education for African Americans by pushing through laws to create schools for African Americans, such as the Gregory Institute, the first grade-school for African Americans established by the Freedmen's Bureau in 1866.



Gregory School Faculty, photograph, 1911; University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Jacob Fontaine Religious Museum.



# Higher Education in Texas



The caption on this photo reads, "Junior Class," and is identified as "Texas Normal School for Negroes." Probably taken at Prairie View Normal Institute (now Prairie View A&M University), date unknown. A normal school trained teachers and provided the rough equivalent of today's high schools. Prairie View was founded in 1879. Prints and Photographs Collection, Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

During the time of Radical Republican leadership, many African Americans were elected or appointed into political positions. A major focus for many African American officials took steps to increase access to higher education for Africans Americans:

- **Representative Meshack Roberts** - established Wiley College in 1873, the first college-level school for African Americans west of the Mississippi.
- **Senator Matthew Gaines** - Supported the Free School Bill that helped finance an agricultural and mechanical college (now Texas A&M University), the first publicly supported state institution of higher education.
- **Representative William Holland** – “Father of Prairie View A & M University” introduced the bill to convert Alta Vista Institute (founded 1876) first into Alta Vista Agricultural College and a year later into Prairie View Normal College (a school for teachers).
- **Representative Thomas Beck** – fought to protect funding for Prairie View University in 1880 when threatened by the state.





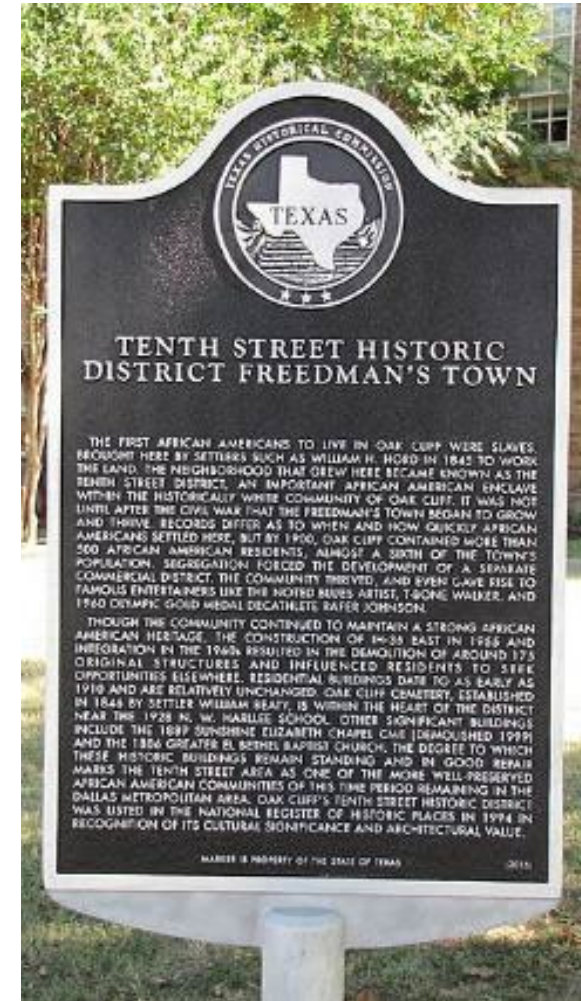
# Settlement In Texas: African American Freedmen's Towns

Following Emancipation, African Americans were faced with important decisions around where they would reside. Some freed people stayed on the farms which they were previously forced to work on, others left in search of family members who had been sold or displaced during slavery, and many left plantations in search of a new life.

Free African Americans often banded together and searched for unoccupied lands to settle and start communities. Often families would manage to collect funds to purchase lands designated for African Americans. In a few cases, freed people were the recipients of small plots of land either given or sold by previous landowners.

These free black settlements were known as Freedmen's Towns or Freedom Towns across Texas. They were set up to be self-sufficient based on community farming, with their own churches, schools, and basic economy.

Between 1865 and 1910, Texas became the home of hundreds of Freedmen's Towns including Kendleton, Independence Heights, and Grant's Colony, which are all incorporated towns today.



# Settlement in Texas: Tejanos and Mexicans



By the end of Reconstruction, approximately 25,000 Tejanos and Mexican Americans resided in Texas. Many of these Texans lived along the Rio Grande area or other rural lands within the Western frontier.

They were often deemed politically and socially inferior by White Texans, and often experienced disenfranchisement or being driven off their lands.

Despite obstacles, Mexicans and Tejanos contributed to the boom in cattle ranching in the 1870's, resulting in extreme economic growth in Texas.

# Immigration in Texas Following Reconstruction



[I&GN Railroad Immigrants Home], photograph, 1880~; University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Palestine Public Library.

<https://education.texashistory.unt.edu>

Between 1880 and 1900, the population of Texas nearly doubled from approximately 1,600,000 residents to slightly over 3 million.

This growth in population was the result of a large influx of migration from other southern states and from other countries.

As agriculture continued to be the major economic practice in Texas, many immigrant communities settled on rich farmland and took up the practices of ranching and farming. Cotton, corn, and sugar planting proved to be profitable practices for new settlers in Texas.

Many newcomers to Texas arrived from Germany, Ireland, France, England, Czechoslovakia, Scotland, Poland, and Sweden.

The diversity of these settlers, amongst the American settlers, African Americans, and Native Texans contributed to a diverse landscape of settlements across Texas.



# Sharecropping

Following emancipation most African Americans continued to live in rural areas of Texas, with many of them remaining on the farms they once worked on as enslaved people. The influx of immigrants coming to Texas also contributed to the development of new systems of farm labor.

## Sharecropping

- White landowners own the land and all farm supplies, animals, and equipment
- Landowners decide on what crops will be grown each season
- Landowner has ownership of the crop and at harvest time a small share of the crop is given to the farmer to sell on their own
- Farmers make little to no money and remain in debt to the landowner for housing and living expenses



[A tenant's or share-cropper's cabin.], photograph, Date Unknown; (<https://texashistory.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metaph1393/>; accessed March 22, 2022), University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Fort Bend Museum.

# Tenant Farming

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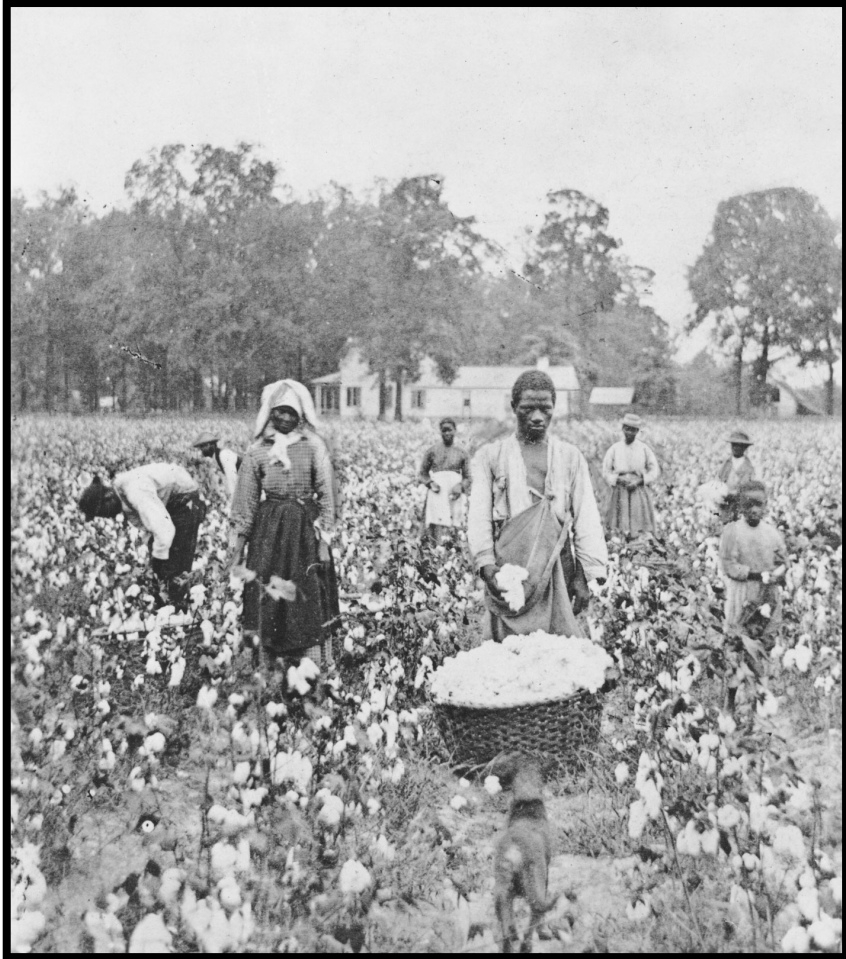
## Tenant Farming

- White landowners rent out housing and small plots of land to African Americans and poor white farmers
- Farmers own their own equipment and animals
- Farmers had a choice of what crops to grow and the price they would sell them for
- Farmers use income made from selling crops to pay for rent, tools, and living expenses
- Farmers allowed more economic mobility based on how successful they were each season



Tenant farm with bicycles and horses], photograph, 1910~; University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting The Williamson Museum.

# Sharecropping and Tenant Farming



Sharecroppers picking cotton in Georgia, photograph by T.W. Ingersoll, 1898.  
Library of Congress,

## Check for Understanding:

*Using your notes and chart from the previous slide, complete the 3-2-1 activity below.*

### 3-2-1 Check for Understanding

- 3 – Name three similarities of sharecropping and tenant farming
- 2 – List two differences between sharecropping and tenant farming
- 1 – Provide one explanation of why these economic practices developed during the period of Reconstruction



# Rebuilding the Texas Economy

By the 1880s, Texas had begun to expand the railroad system across the state to support the Southern industries of farming and ranching. Texas railways were essential for the transportation of cotton, meat, tobacco, and lumber products across the developing nation.

Being a land-rich state, Texas politicians devised a large-scale plan for selling cheap lands in order to fund major construction projects, such as a new state capitol in 1882.

Major cities were popping up across the state, with Galveston and San Antonio being urban centers by 1870.



[I&GN Railroad Engine Number 139], photograph, 1880~; University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Palestine Public Library.



## Think like a Historian

Primary Source: 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment

*Source:*

U.S. Constitution

## Think - Pair - Share

Using the guided questions, analyze the primary source document to answer the document analysis questions.

*Support your claims using text evidence.*

### Document Analysis Questions:

1. What is the purpose of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment?
2. Based on the text of the Amendment, under what conditions is forced labor allowed?
3. What can you infer about the impact that this law will have on newly free people?
4. Make a prediction: How do you think this law will impact Texas following Reconstruction?

# New Economic Practices: Convict Lease System



Convict Laborers Shaping Columns, photograph, 1885~; University of North Texas Libraries, The Portal to Texas History, <https://texashistory.unt.edu>; crediting Austin History Center, Austin Public Library.

Emerging as early as 1867, Texas began the act of **convict leasing** – or leasing of inmates to perform forced labor for private companies. The influx of prisoners into the prison system was primarily a result of the Texas Black Codes. Majority of the prison population following Reconstruction were African American men, often arrested for petty crimes such as **vagrancy** or theft.

During the first decade of convict leasing (1867-1877), convict laborers were used to assist with railroad construction across the state.

By 1877, the Texas prison system was leased to large landowners in Fort Bend and Brazoria counties. Under this system of convict labor, the leases were able to sublet prison inmates to small businesses, railroad companies, and other private farms. This period was riddled with political corruption and inhumane practices of forced labor and punishment.

The practice of convict leasing continued in Texas under operation of the state until 1910's.

# Political Shifts in Texas

The political tide shifted in Texas during the election in late 1872. Many Texans were outraged by Governor Davis's actions, such as the creation of a state police force, increasing taxes, and a growing state debt.

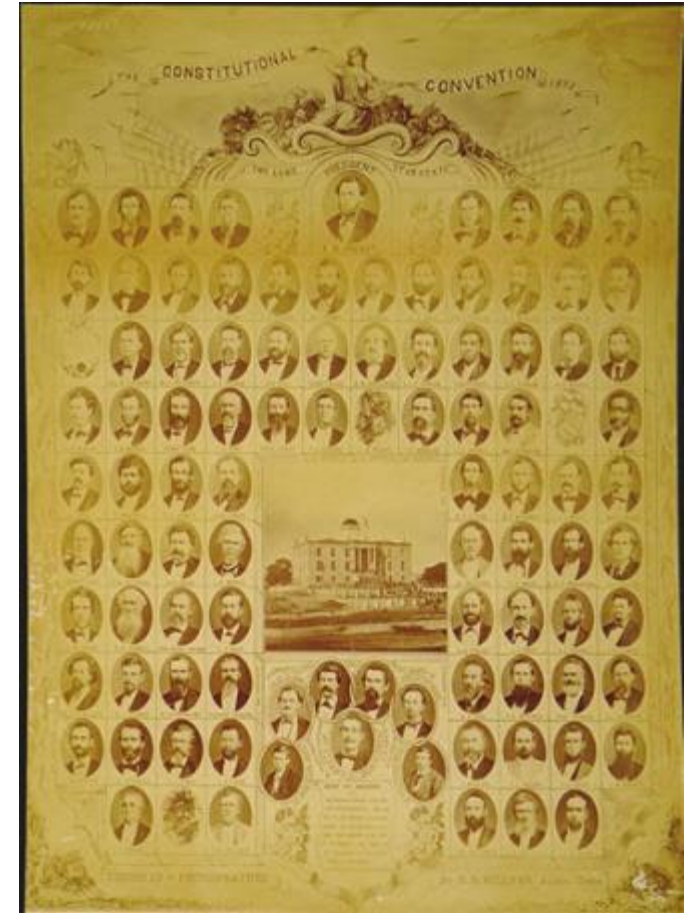
After a bitter election, Texans elected a Democratic majority to the House of Representatives and a new governor, Democrat Richard Coke.

The new government quickly acted to undo many of the Radical Republican policies, including abolishing the state police force and localizing the state school system.

Under Democratic leadership, the legislature removed Reconstruction policies, worked to decentralize the government, and regain political control of the state for decades to come.

The Democrats sought to rewrite the constitution in 1875. They met in Austin to hold a Constitutional Convention. The goal of the convention was the rewrite the Constitution to reflect their own policies and beliefs of white superiority. They also desired to limit federal intervention in the state's affairs by increasing the right of the state to self-govern.

The Constitution of 1876 would be created, resulting in the official end of Reconstruction policies in Texas. This constitution remains the basis of the Texas Constitution today.



Composite photo showing the delegates to the 1875 Constitutional Convention.



# Resistance and Repression

Supported by Democrats in political office, the Ku Klux Klan emerged as a white supremacist group in Texas.

African Americans, Union sympathizers, and Republicans – essentially anyone who worked to change the racial system in the South during or after Reconstruction, were met with the threat of violence. Violence was so prevalent in Texas that many African Americans were motivated to leave Texas during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Ku Klux Klan was responsible for beating, whipping ,and murdering — mostly at events conducted at night under disguise. These masked men sought to prevent blacks from voting, despite the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment granting them the right to vote.

The Klan was responsible for the extreme decline in the African American votes in the South following Reconstruction until the era of Civil Rights in America. It is also estimated that nearly 3,500 African Americans were lynched in the United States during this same period.



## Apply your knowledge:

Use notes and activities from this lesson to support your thinking process.

## Think - Pair - Share

Using the lesson essential questions discussed at the beginning of the lesson and your newly gained perspective about the impact and effects of Reconstruction, answer the following questions using supporting evidence.

### Essential Questions - Exit Ticket

1. How did economic practices of Reconstruction impact Texans, including the newly freed African Americans?
2. In what ways did forced labor continue in Texas following Reconstruction?
3. How did Texans embrace or resist changes in the state resulting from Reconstruction?