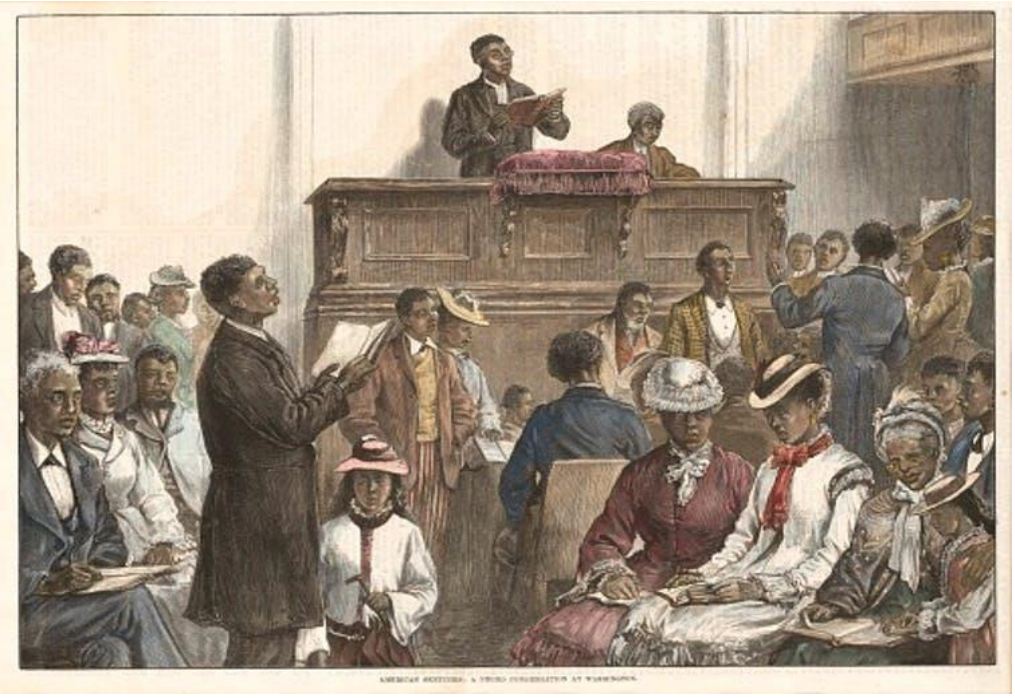
How have African Americans created their own freedom following emancipation?



African-American Church Congregation in Washington DC, 1870s

Supporting Questions

1. How did African Americans take advantage of social, economic, and political opportunities after the Civil War?
2. How did African Americans use new legislation, their new found political, economic, and social capital to further secure their freedom and independence?
3. How have African Americans resisted white supremacy and what was the impact of African Americans' resistance during the Reconstruction Era?

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11th Grade US History Reconstruction Inquiry

How have African Americans created their own freedom following emancipation?	
Virginia Social Studies Standards	VA SOL STANDARD VUS.7e: The student will apply social science skills to understand the Civil War and Reconstruction eras and their significance as major turning points in American history by evaluating and explaining the political and economic impact of the war and Reconstruction, including the adoption of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution of the United States. Teaching Tolerance Social Justice Standards: 17, 19, 20
Staging the Compelling Question	Read the poem Still I Rise by Maya Angelou, then complete the thinking routine "Color-Symbol-Image".

Supporting Question	Supporting Question	Supporting Question
How did African Americans take advantage of social, economic, and political opportunities after the Civil War?	How did African Americans use new legislation and their newly found political, economic, and social capital to further secure their freedom and independence?	How did African Americans resist white supremacy and what was the impact of African Americans' agency and resistance during the Reconstruction Era?
Formative Performance Task	**Formative Performance Task**	**Formative Performance Task**
Create a 3-way T-Chart that shows the political, social, and economic opportunities African Americans took advantage of post Civil War.	Create an annotated photo gallery of prominent African American politicians, business owners, organizations, and leaders.	Make a claim and support it with evidence from the sources used today and previously.
Featured Sources	**Featured Sources**	**Featured Sources**
Source A: Reconstruction Video **Source B:** Wm I. Johnson interview **Source C:** The Appeal **Source D**: Tolson Chapel Schools **Source E**: Cuffeytown Thirteen	**Source A**: Radical Republicans in GA **Source B:** African Americans in Congress **Source C:** Black Virginia Legislators	**Source A**: Greenwood & Tulsa Race Riots Video **Source B**: Election Day in Mississippi **Source C:** Mutual Aid Societies **Source D:** Black Churches

Summative Performance Task	**ARGUMENT.** Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay, or multimedia presentation) that evaluates the need to study these events using specific claims and relevant evidence from sources while acknowledging competing views.
	EXTENSION. Make a Claim: Are there examples in modern times of African Americans having the determination to show resistance to those that try to limit freedom and equality?
Taking Informed Action	**UNDERSTAND.** African Americans continue to construct freedom for themselves today through political, social, and economic actions despite continued barriers of institutional, individual, and structural racism. **ASSESS.** Students make connections between the ways in which African Americans constructed freedom for themselves in the Reconstruction era and how people continue to do so today. **ACT.** Write a persuasive letter to a representative in government on a law, policy and/or practice related to African Americans and other marginalized people who might be disenfranchised in their rights and freedoms.

**Featured sources are suggested and links are provided. It may be that these links are broken and we apologize in advance for the inconvenience. This inquiry was developed by ...*

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Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry focuses on the ways in which African Americans have been able to construct their own freedom in the face of injustice, violence, and white backlash following emancipation and in the era of Reconstruction and beyond.

The questions, tasks, and sources in this inquiry ask students to examine the political, social, and economic successes African Americans were able to create for themselves, as well as the social, political, and institutional barriers that African Americans had to overcome in order to achieve these successes.

This inquiry highlights the following Virginia social studies standards:

VA SOL STANDARD VUS.7e

- The student will apply social science skills to understand the Civil War and Reconstruction eras and their significance as major turning points in American history by
    - evaluating and explaining the political and economic impact of the war and Reconstruction, including the adoption of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution of the United States.

This inquiry is expected to take four 50-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (e.g., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, featured sources, writing). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiry to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. This inquiry lends itself to differentiation and modeling of historical thinking skills while assisting students in reading the variety of sources.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question, students will need to explore primary and secondary sources, including, but not limited to interviews, photographs, and videos that detail the barriers that newly freed Blacks faced, as well as the communities, institutions, and resources that they built to construct their own freedom and success.

The formative performance tasks ask students to synthesize information gathered from featured sources to illustrate the specific ways in which African Americans were able to construct their freedom, as well as exploring the lasting impact of Black resistance and resilience.

Ultimately, students make an argument in response to the compelling question about the ways in which African Americans were able to construct their own freedom.

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Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, students are asked to read the poem *Still I Rise* by Maya Angelou, then complete the thinking routine "Color-Symbol-Image". This is a chance to talk to students about what it means to be "resilient" and to encourage students to think about the "big idea" of this inquiry which is Black perseverance throughout time.

The staging task is not designed to delve too far into the specific content of the compelling question. Instead, it's intended to provide a frame of reference and context for the inquiry. Specifically, the ways in which African Americans have been able to construct their own freedom following emancipation in the face of violence and white backlash.

This task may be completed in a brief period of time, depending on how much overall time is available for the inquiry. If following the guidelines described in the inquiry overview (three or five 50-minute class periods), then this staging task would likely only last 10-15 minutes.

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Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question asks, “How did African Americans take advantage of social, economic, and political opportunities after the Civil War?” The purpose of this question is to encourage students to think of the many ways in which newly freed African Americans were able to innovate and use their own agency in multiple facets of life to take full advantage of their earned freedom.

The featured sources include:

Source A: Reconstruction Overview Video

Source B: Wm I. Johnson ex-slave interview

Source C: The Appeal

Source D: Tolson Chapel Schools

Source E: Cuffeytown Thirteen

The formative performance task is to create a 3-way T-Chart that shows the political, social, and economic opportunities African Americans took advantage of post Civil War.

The following procedures may be used to support students as they complete this task.

- Students watch the Reconstruction Overview video for context and background into American life during Reconstruction
- Students read the William Johnson interview to learn how newly freed enslaved people were able to navigate freedom in America following emancipation.
- Students read "The Appeal" from Proceedings of the Convention of the Colored People of VA to understand the ways in which Black were able to organize to make demands and progress in America
- Students read the article on Tolson Chapel Schools to understand the ways in which Blacks were able to educate themselves during Reconstruction.
- Students read about the Cuffeytown Thirteen to explore an example of how African Americans were able to establish their own communities

Work on the formative performance task provides students an opportunity to gather information they will need in responding to the compelling question.

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Supporting Question 1	
Featured Source	**Source A:** Reconstruction Overview Video

This source is a four-minute video on the Reconstruction and is available online at YouTube.

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Supporting Question 1	
Featured Source	**Source B:** William I. Johnson ex-slave interview

This source is an excerpt from a WPA slave narrative and interview of ex-slave William Johnson and is available online from the University of Virginia.

Interview - William I. Johnson Jr.

Ex-slave.

Richmond, Virginia

By Milton L. Randolph, Field Worker

May 28, 1937

In January of 1866 I came to Richmond and got a job as "Hod carrier" for Maynard Brick Contractors and followed brick work for ten to twelve years during which time I learned to be a bricklayer. I helped to build Fort Harrison. Later I worked for the firm of Crump and Powell for six to seven years; then Ellis Redform as foremen of his brick construction work for 17 years, until 1907.

In 1907 I started contracting for myself and ran an active business until 1932 when I lost my leg, through an infection in my left foot. Although at 97 I am still active in my Fraternal connection I gave up my business and decided to take it easy. (Mr. Johnson enjoyed the reputation of being one of the leading contractors in Richmond during the days of his active work 1907 to 1932).

Now with all I have done in my life I have my first day to go to school. I can read a little, but when it comes to figures I don't ask nobody any questions.

I've been an active member of the first Baptist Church of 67 years—since, May, 1870, and am an active member in the Good Samaritans, Odd Fellows, Masons, St. Luke and Ideals. I joined the Good Samaritans March 18, 1872 and today at 97 years of age I am their elected delegate to the Grand Lodge Session to be held in Petersburg, Virginia this year. I am the only living person in Virginia who was a member when the Grand Lodge was organized in 1872.

My membership in the Odd Fellows started in December, 1879. Last December 8th I had been active with them for 57 years. I am the oldest man in the "Past Grand Masters Council," and am the oldest man in the Richmond Patriach #6.

Joined Masons, December, 1879; St. Lukes October, 1874; the Forrester's Council #9, first male council made in City of Richmond; and joined National Ideals in May, 1921.

I contribute my good fortune of health, long life and prosperity to my love and kindness to my mother, sisters, brothers and kinfolks. My mother died in Philadelphia about six years ago at the age of 105. I had promised her that when she died I would see that she got a good burial and I had her fixed up good, brought her to Richmond and buried. I have raised all of my children, educated them, then college, those wanted it. I've helped grandchildren and now I help to educate great grandchildren. The Lord is just blessing me that'[s] all.["]

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Supporting Question 1	
Featured Source	**Source C:** The Appeal

This source is an excerpt from the Proceedings of the Convention of the Colored People of VA., Held in the City of Alexandria (August 2–5, 1865), in which the Rev. John M. Brown asserts that both suffrage and the continued intervention of federal authority are necessary for procuring justice and equality for African Americans. The full excerpt iis available online at Encyclopedia Virginia.

"We, the delegates of the colored people of the State of Virginia, in Convention assembled at Alexandria, Virginia, to act and advise what is thought best to be done for the interests of the colored people of the State, and to give expression of our feelings and desires, do hereby appeal to the conscientious, sympathetic, and just judgment of the American people, solemnly declaring that

— page 9 —

we desire to live upon the most friendly and agreeable terms with all men; we feel no ill-will or prejudice towards our former oppressors; are willing and desire to forgive and forget the past, and so shape our future conduct as shall promote our happiness and the interest of the community in which we live; and that we believe in this State we have still many warm and solid friends among the white people, and that this portion of them will do all they can for our improvement and elevation...

But, while we are free to acknowledge all that we have said above, we must, on the other hand, be allowed to… assert that we believe that we have among the white people of this State many who are our most inveterate enemies; who hate us as a class, and who feel no sympathy with or for us; who despise us simply because we are black, and, especially, because we have been made free by the power of the United States Government...

We have ever been a people of docility and obedience, though we have felt for years that the condition of slavery was a curse upon us imposed by might, and not by right, yet we have submitted without any act of ours to avenge ourselves upon those who had so long oppressed us, as a race of men. Many of them treated us as brutes of the field. In all this we confess we see the hand of an all-wise God, who has seen fit to hold the passions of His African children until He saw fit to stir the passions of the two sections of the country—that both North and South should suffer for the sin of slavery...

In this state of chaos and disorganization we are assembled here to-day, to appeal to the citizens of the State of Virginia and to the Government of the United States for that protection which we so much need, and for which freemen in all ages have contended...

We claim, then, as citizens of this State, the laws of the Commonwealth shall give to all men equal protection; that each and every man may appeal to the law for his equal rights without regard to the color of his skin; and we believe this can only be done by extending to us the elective franchise, which we believe to be our inalienable right as freemen, and which the Declaration of Independence guarantees to all free citizens of this Government and which is the privilege of the nation. We claim the right of suffrage:

1st. Because we can see no other safe-guard for our protection.

2d. Because we are citizens of the country and natives of this State.

3d. Because we are as well qualified to vote who shall be our rulers as many who do vote for that purpose who have no

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interest in us, and know not our wants.

— page 10 —

4th. Because our representation as heretofore felt in Congress was not in accordance with our own wishes, and therefore we feel it is right and our privilege to vote for the men who shall so represent us.

5th. Because we believe that the time has come when the colored people are to be felt as a power in this Government, either for good or evil, and that there is no way so calculated to make him subservient for good as to make him a good and loyal citizen.

6th. Because we believe it will be the means of restoring the balance of power which shall harmonize the conflicting elements which are now so rife in the South.

7th. Because we believe that if the white men will look at the subject in its proper light they will see the necessity of granting us this privilege, as they will find in us friends that will ever vote for men who shall be true to the State and loyal to the United States, and because nothing short of equality in law will ever secure to us the wants which every freeman needs and must enjoy if he will be at peace at home and in the community in which he lives. With these considerations we do most respectfully and earnestly appeal first to the citizens of Virginia that they give ear to our humble petition, that in the reconstruction of the laws of this State they do in the prayer of this Convention and before a just God so harmonize their laws as there shall be no distinction before law on account of color, and that every man may expect justice before the tribunals of the State, and then shall righteousness go forth as brightness, and truth as a lamp that burneth.

Vocabulary

Foremen: Chief or boss

Conscientious: Wanting to do what is right

Inveterate: Deep-rooted, firmly established

Docility: obedient, submissive

Suffrage: the right of voting

Tribunals: court, or place of justice

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Supporting Question 1	
Featured Source	**Source D:** Tolson Chapel Schools

This source is a webpage article with pictures and links, detailing the ways in which African Americans were able to educate themselves in the years following emancipation and is available online at the National Park Service.

National Park Service

African Americans and Education During Reconstruction: The Tolson's Chapel Schools

Antietam National Battlefield

During the Reconstruction Era, African Americans in the former slave-holding states saw education as an important step towards achieving equality, independence, and prosperity. As a result, they found ways to learn despite the many obstacles that poverty and white people placed in their path. African Americans' commitment to education had lasting effects on the former slave-holding states. As voters and legislators, they played crucial roles in creating public

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Featured Source	**Source E:** Cuffeytown Thirteen

This source is a description of a town founded by Black soldiers known as the Cuffeytown Thirteen and is available online from the City of Chesapeake.

THE CUFFEYTOWN THIRTEEN

★ ★ ★

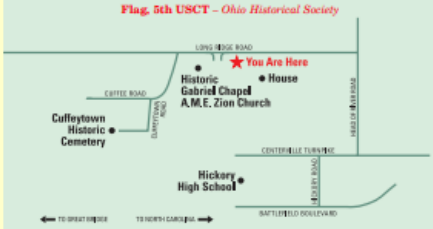
Patriot Heroes

Thirteen African American veterans of the Civil War are interred nearby at the Cuffeytown Historic Cemetery. They served in the 5th, 10th, and 36th United States Colored Troops infantry regiments organized in 1863 and 1864, after the Emancipation Proclamation authorized the recruitment of blacks for the U.S. Army and Navy. The 5th USCT, organized in Ohio in August 1863, fought in North Carolina as well as in the Virginia battles of the Crater at Petersburg, New Market Heights, and Fair Oaks. The 10th USCT was organized in Virginia in November 1863 and fought in 1864 at the Battle of Wilson's Wharf (Fort Pocahontas). The 36th USCT, organized from the 2nd North Carolina Colored Infantry in February 1864, fought in the Battle of New Market Heights, the Appomattox Campaign, and in North Carolina. The 5th USCT was demobilized in North Carolina in September 1865, while the 10th and 36th USCT were ordered to Texas after the war and mustered out there in 1866.

About 200,000 African Americans served in the U.S. Army and Navy during the Civil War, fighting for freedom and the restoration of the Union. Free blacks founded Cuffeytown long before the war. The veterans and other residents established the Gabriel Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church in 1866.

5th USCT, Delaware, Ohio – *Ohio Historical Society*

Flag, 5th USCT – *Ohio Historical Society*



In the darkness of their bondage,
In the depths of slavery's night,
Their muskets flashed the dawning,
And they fought their way to light.
– Paul Laurence Dunbar,
"The Colored Soldier"

Unidentified brothers in arms, ca. 1863–65 – *Library of Congress*

THE CUFFEYTOWN THIRTEEN

5th USCT
Pvt. Walter Smith, Co. I

10th USCT:
Sgt. William Coffey, Co. G
Pvt. Bluet Cuffey, Co. H
Corp. Emerson Cuffey, Co. G
Pvt. Lemuel Cuffey, Co. F
Sgt. Wilson Cuffey, Co. H
Sgt. William Cuffey, Co. F
Corp. Levi Sevils, Co. H
Pvt. Cornelius Smith, Co. F
Pvt. James W. Smith, Co. F
Pvt. Samuel Smith, Co. H
Pvt. John Whitehurst, Co. H

36th USCT:
Sgt. Thomas Van, Co. C

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Supporting Question 2

The second supporting question asks, "How did African Americans use new legislation and their newly found political, economic, and social capital to further secure their freedom and independence?" This question asks students to consider the ways in which African Americans were able to build on the successes gained both through institutional support structures such as legislation, as well as their own successes following the Civil War in order to thrive in American society.

The featured sources include:

Source A: Radical Republicans in GA

Source B: African Americans in Congress

Source C: Black Virginia Legislators

The formative performance task is to create an annotated photo gallery of prominent African American politicians, business owners, organizations, and leaders.

The following procedure may be used to support students as they complete this task.

- Students should read the article on Radical Republicans for context and background into the political landscape in the time following Emancipation.
- Students explore the image of the first Black Senator and representatives in Congress. They should use this image as a starting point to learn more about each member and their importance.
- Students explore the list of Black legislators from 1867-1899. Students should click on each name and read about the legislators, while curating a possible list of politicians to include in their annotated photo gallery.

Work on the formative performance task provides students an opportunity to gather information they will need in responding to the compelling question.

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Supporting Question 2	
Featured Source	**Source A:** Radical Republicans in GA

This source is an article detailing the ideologies of the Republican party and its leaders in the south during reconstruction and is available online at Duke University Libraries.

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"The Arm of Justice Cannot—Will Not Sleep": Radical Republicans during Reconstruction in the South

FEBRUARY 7, 2020 MLP60@DUKE.EDU

Post contributed by Laurin Penland, Library Assistant for Technical Services

Warning: Some of the language in this blog post is outdated and considered offensive today. There are also descriptions of violence against African Americans in the South during Reconstruction.

The way in which archivists think about Reconstruction (1865-1877) in the United States can sometimes determine how we describe and interpret materials produced during that period. For example, if you believe that Reconstruction was an ill-fated, corrupt takeover of the South by Northern Republicans—a brief episode doomed to fail—then it makes sense that you would describe a Republican politician in Georgia as self-interested. The particular politician that I have in mind is John Emory Bryant (1836-1900), who was born in Maine, fought for the Union, and pursued a Republican political career in Georgia after the Civil War. Bryant was also an abolitionist, teacher, agent of the Freedmen's Bureau, newspaper editor and publisher, and lawyer. The Rubenstein Library holds his papers, the bulk of which were acquired in 1968 (a later addition arrived in 2002). His papers came up recently as a candidate for re-processing due to their popularity among researchers, the aging folders and

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Supporting Question 2	
Featured Source	**Source B:** African Americans in Congress

This source is an image of "the first colored senator and representatives - in the 41st and 42nd Congress of the United States" and is available online at the Library of Congress.

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Supporting Question 2	
Featured Source	**Source C:** Black Virginia Legislators

This source is a list of all African American members of the Convention of 1867–1868, House of Delegates, Senate of Virginia, and U.S. House of Representatives and is available online at Encyclopedia Virginia.

African American Legislators (1867–1899)

Contributed by the *Dictionary of Virginia Biography* and *Encyclopedia Virginia* staff

The following list includes all African American members of the Convention of 1867-1868, House of Delegates, Senate of Virginia, and U.S. House of Representatives. MORE...

In This Entry

- Convention of 1867-1868
- House of Delegates
- Senate of Virginia
- U.S. House of Representatives
- Further Reading

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Convention of 1867–1868

- William H. Andrews (b. ca. 1839), from Surry County.
- James D. Barrett (1833-1903), from Fluvanna County.
- Thomas Bayne (ca. 1824-1888), from Norfolk.
- J. W. D. Bland (1844-1870), from Prince Edward County.
- William Breedlove (ca. 1820-1871), from Essex County.
- John Brown (ca. 1830-after 1900), from Southampton County.
- David Canada (fl. 1867-1869), from Halifax County.

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Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question asks, "How have African Americans resisted white supremacy and what was the impact of African Americans' resistance during the Reconstruction Era?" This question asks students to consider the ways in which African Americans were able to overcome the institutional and de facto discrimination that Blacks faced in the United States following emancipation. Students will explore the ways in which white backlash seeked to limit Black freedom, and the resiliency of Black communities in the face of violent white supremacy. Students are encouraged to explore the lasting impacts and legacies that were created by Black Americans who fought against injustice following Reconstruction. Students should consider the ways in which Blacks were able to build their own communities and opportunities in the face of struggle, and what impact that has had on Black Americans, and American society today.

The featured sources include:

Source A: Greenwood & Tulsa Race Riots Video

Source B: Election Day in Mississippi

Source C: Mutual Aid Societies

Source D: Black Churches

Source E: HBCUs

The formative performance task is to write a paragraph answering the supporting question.

The following procedure may be used to support students as they complete this task.

- Students should watch the video on the Greenwood & Tulsa Race Riots, and read Senator Caldwell's account of election day in Mississippi to gather an understanding of the violence and backlash people of color faced following Reconstruction.
- Students should review the list and descriptions of mutual aid societies. While these societies were founded before emancipation, students should research the impact these societies had on Reconstruction and the importance of their ability to provide resources to African Americans trying to build a life for themselves following enslavement. Possible discussion questions include:
    - What characteristics and challenges do the societies share?
    - What goals are added as the societies develop?
    - How do the societies' leaders encourage fellow African Americans to become members?
    - How did African Americans exercise autonomy and influence through community?
- Students should read the web article about African American churches in Virginia and consider the role churches played in the social, economic, and political growth of African American communities.

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Work on the formative performance task provides students an opportunity to gather information they will need in responding to the compelling question.

Supporting Question 3	
Featured Source	**Source A:** Greenwood & Tulsa Race Riots Video

This source is a PBS video describing the towns of Greenwood and Tulsa before they were destroyed by white mobs in the early 1900s. It is available online on YouTube.

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Supporting Question 3	
Featured Source	**Source B:** Election Day in Mississippi

This source is a personal account of Eugene Welborne detailing the efforts of State Senator Charles Caldwell to ensure a fair vote in Mississippi in 1875 and is available online at FacingHistory.org. The link to access "Addressing Dehumanizing Language from History" can be found in Appendix A.

We have chosen to include certain racial epithets in this handout in order to honestly communicate the bigoted language of the time. We recommend that teachers review the section "Addressing Dehumanizing Language from History" in Appendix A before using this material.

State Senator Charles Caldwell was a former slave who had led a company of African American soldiers, earlier in 1875, in a state militia formed to protect freedpeople from the White Line. The militia was later disbanded by the governor as part of a "peace agreement" with the White Line, but attacks and intimidation continued, and Caldwell himself was assassinated later that year. Eugene Welborne, who served as Caldwell's first lieutenant in the militia, gave this account of election day in November 1875 in Clinton, Mississippi, and Caldwell's efforts to ensure a fair vote.

We could hear in the morning, the cannons commencing to shoot in every direction, just a firing. You could see men with their sixteen-shooters buckled on them charging all through the country. They went in squads.

One crowd would come in from Raymond and say, "One hundred and fifty niggers killed in Raymond; one white man slightly wounded." The guns were firing continually. Word came from Jackson, "The white men have whipped the niggers and run them out."

We did not know what in the world to do. Senator Caldwell was there and I said, "Senator, I think we might just as well give up. We can't do anything here. These men are riding all about the county with their sixteen-shooters." He says, "No. We are going to stay right here. I don't care what they say to you, don't you say a word." We voted as rapidly as we could.

Our votes were pretty strong all day and we would have polled our usual vote, even with all the intimidation, if they would have let us. But our Republicans that were appointed by the board of registration were told that it would not be healthy for them to serve and they made the whole thing Democratic. So when a Republican would come in to vote this fellow looked on the book and said, "I cannot find your name here. Stand aside." They turned off 80 Republicans, one after the other, that way.

I saw Senator Caldwell standing at the door. Said I, "What are you going to do about these registration papers?" "I think," says he, "we will go in and see these fellows." So we went in and spoke to one of the officers. When Mr. Caldwell said, "I know that this man's name was on that book," they said it didn't make any difference what he knew and that he was not going to vote.

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Supporting Question 3	
Featured Source	**Source C:** Mutual Aid Societies

This source is a list and description of several mutual aid societies and is available online at the National Humanities Center.

Mutual assistance and self-help have been cornerstones of African American community for generations. Here we offer texts that document what, in 1903, W E. B. Du Bois called "the first wavering step of a people toward organized social life."1 The earliest mutual assistance societies among free blacks provided a form of health and life insurance for their members—care of the sick, burials for the dead, and support for widows and orphans. Later societies sought to promote education and job training, especially for newly arrived African Americans, freemen and fugitive slaves. While the number of societies attests to the wide-ranging efforts of northern free blacks, most were hampered by low funds and low membership.

Free African Society, Philadelphia, 1787. Founded by the black ministers Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, the Free African Society listed its goals—as well as its expectations of all members—in its founding document. Members would contribute money to a fund from which a weekly sum would be paid to the "needy of this society . . . provided, this necessity is not brought on them by their own imprudence." The society was nondenominational to include free blacks of all religious sects, as no one sect had enough members to create its own mutual aid society. "How great a step this was," wrote W. E. B. Du Bois, "we of to-day scarcely realize."1

New York African Society for Mutual Relief, 1808. Similar to the Free African Society, the New York society was formed two decades later to provide a form of health and life insurance for its members and their families. In this 1809 address the president and cofounder of the society, William Hamilton, exhorted its members to be firm in their commitment to the society i.e., to each other. "Let us all be united, my Brethren," he concludes in rousing rhetoric, for "MUTUAL INTEREST, MUTUAL BENEFIT, AND MUTUAL RELIEF." The Society persevered for more than 150 years, into the 1950s.

Negro mutual benefit societies in Philadelphia, 1831. In a newspaper notice "To the Public," the mutual benefit societies of Philadelphia listed their goals and financial contributions for the relief and education of poor African Americans in the city. Why would they do this? Because "many have mistaken our object, and doubted the utility of these institutions," even accusing them of promoting "extravagance and dissipation" among their recipients. Not so, the societies insist: their funds go to the neediest among them for basic sustenance.

Phoenix Society, New York City, 1833. The newly formed Phoenix Society also published its goals in a newspaper, in this case the African American Liberator. Education was its primary object, and it outlined achievable steps to enroll black children and adults in reading and writing classes, trade apprenticeships, lending libraries, lecture series, and self-improvement groups—even providing clothing to children who could not otherwise participate. Although the society soon folded for lack of funds, other societies continued similar programs in New York City.

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Supporting Question 3	
Featured Source	**Source D:** Black Churches

This source is a web article that explores the importance and influence of Black churches in Virginia during Reconstruction and is available online at Encyclopedia Virginia.

Encyclopedia Virginia
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African American Churches in Virginia (1865–1900)

Contributed by William E. Montgomery

African American churches in Virginia after the American Civil War (1861-1865) addressed both the spiritual and material needs of African Americans emerging from slavery. Church communities during the slavery era provided intangible support such as hope for justice, while also offering covert locations for tangible help such as education and escape. After the abolition of slavery, these predominantly Christian and Protestant churches retained their central influence and became primary locations for freedpeople to exercise their new freedom. No longer legally required to maintain white supervision, many churches split from white southern Christian denominations and established alliances with other independent black congregations. These black church networks often accepted financial help from northern white organizations and became dominant forces for civil rights activism, literacy education, and job training. At the same time as a new generation of more educated, more confident African American freedpeople were coming of age, Reconstruction policies lost government enforcement. Many of the political gains achieved were overturned by the Virginia Constitutional Convention (1901-1902), but black churches remained the dominant organizing

First African Baptist Church

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Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry students have examined the ways in which African Americans were able to create opportunity and success out of the many struggles that came out of emancipation and Reconstruction. Students should be able to demonstrate the breadth of their understanding and their ability to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this summative performance task, students are asked to construct an evidence-based argument responding to the compelling question "How have African Americans created their own freedom following emancipation?" It is important to note that students' arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students' arguments likely will vary, but could include any of the following.

- African Americans constructed their own freedom by relying on their communities to support themselves in building up their political, economic, and social power after the Civil War, despite the work of some white people who attempted to undermine them.
- African Americans were supported in their freedom by the laws and amendments passed after the Civil War. However, they also faced limits on their freedom as many White southern states and governments who did not want them to have political and economic power.
- Individuals and groups showed self-agency to exhibit their freedom politically and economically even as white Americans tried to stop progress.

To extend this inquiry, students should make a claim around the question: Are there examples in modern times of African Americans having the determination to show resistance to those that try to limit freedom and equality?

To take informed action students complete the following steps.

- Students demonstrate that they understand by articulating how African Americans continue to construct freedom for themselves today through political, social, and economic actions despite continued barriers of institutional, individual, and structural racism.
- Students assess by making connections between the ways in which African Americans constructed freedom for themselves in the Reconstruction era and how people continue to do so today.
- Students act by writing a persuasive letter to a representative in government convincing him or her to take action on a law, policy, procedure, and/or practice to ensure that African Americans and other marginalized people in our community are not disenfranchised in their rights and freedoms.

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Appendix A

- Resource on Addressing Dehumanizing Language from History: https://www.facinghistory.org/reconstruction-era/addressing-dehumanizing-language-history

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