

## Investigate This Document Further #3: Letter of Professor Alfred O. Coffin to Albion W. Tourgee (January 4, 1891, #5207): After Emancipation: Problems of Race Relations in the U.S.

*\*Based on Library of Congress lesson: "After Reconstruction: Problems of African Americans in the South" at: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/reconstruction/studentindex.html>*

### Background

From Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 onward, African Americans (and those who supported them) faced many barriers to becoming full participants in American social and political life. Some of these problems grew worse as time went on - especially after the formal end in 1877 of the time known as Reconstruction - while other, new problems emerged in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Responses to the different problems varied as well, including creation of social and political organizations, individual actions, use of media and literature, and even violence.

### Lesson Activities

Begin the lesson by sharing with students a copy of the letter of Professor Alfred O. Coffin to Albion W. Tourgee (January 4, 1891#5207). Students should engage in [document analysis](#) of the letter, either in small groups or as a class led by the teacher. Make sure students understand who Tourgee and Coffin were, where the letter came from and the time in which it was written, what information is conveyed in the letter that suggests personal as well as more general problems facing Coffin and other African Americans at the time.

Using information from the letter along with excerpts of primary source documents from Eric Foner's *Freedom's Unfinished Revolution*, brainstorm a list of problems African Americans faced after Emancipation. Use what you know about conditions during Reconstruction and racial attitudes of the time to develop your ideas.

*\*Teacher can pre-select sources from Foner's book and distribute copies or, assign pages to students to save time*

2. Students record their ideas on paper. These are then shared with entire class – problems that seem similar can be grouped together to come up with categories similar to those listed on next page.

3. Study the Timeline of African American History in *African American Perspectives, 1818-1907: African American Timeline, 1852-1925* to corroborate shared ideas as well as to add new information discovered by looking at timeline events.

4. Use the information from the Timeline and your own ideas to develop a list of three important problems facing African Americans after Emancipation. Also use this information to develop a list of possible and actual responses to the problems encountered.

5. When you have completed your list, you will discuss it with the rest of your class in the context of a simulation activity.

## Section 2

Each student is asked to select (or is assigned) one problem faced by African Americans after Emancipation. Examine at least three to five primary sources from the collections listed below that provide evidence of the problem you have identified. Be sure to include any evidence of enacted or proposed responses to that problem. The search tips below will help you choose search words to find relevant primary sources.

*Search collections:*

[African American Perspectives: 1818-1907](#)

[American Memory Timeline](#)

[Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress](#)

[Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers](#)

[Albion Winegar Tourgee Papers on New York Heritage](#)

*Search Tips*

Use keywords and synonyms to produce a list of documents. For example, if you are studying 'Voting Rights' search on black suffrage, vote, and other related words. This chart includes some helpful keyword search terms. You may need to think of some additional search words to find documents for your topic. Remember to look at the language in the document for additional search terms. What terms do the authors of the documents use in their writing? These terms were the language of the day and will lead you to successful searches for more material in the collection.

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Keyword Search Terms</b>	<b>Sample Primary Source</b>
Lynching	lynching, hanging	<a href="#">"Lynch Law in Georgia"</a>
Race Riot/Violence	civil rights, violence, riot	<a href="#">"Open Letter to President McKinley"</a>
Voting Rights	black suffrage, vote, ballot	<a href="#">"The Hardwick Bill: An Interview"</a>

Negative media	media, newspapers, race cartoon	<a href="#"><u>"Difficult Problems Solving Themselves"</u></a>
Economic	freedmen labor, confiscated lands, economic	<a href="#"><u>A Chance to Make a Living</u></a>
Segregation/ Jim Crow Laws	equality, segregation, black jim crow laws	<a href="#"><u>"Equality Before the Law"</u></a>
Education	education for freedmen, higher education, industrial education	<a href="#"><u>"Education of the Negro"</u></a>

Use the skills you have learned to analyze the sources. Answer the following study questions about your problem and use them to help organize your evidence:

*Study Questions*

Who was involved with this problem? What was at stake?

What was the scope of this problem (lives lost, property damages, geographic area, businesses disrupted, etc.)?

How did this problem affect African Americans? Others?

What was one response carried out or proposed that could have helped resolve this problem?

What were some arguments for and against this enacted or proposed response?