Many African Americans left plantations and started to travel. They were in search of lost family members, economic opportunities and more freedom.

Ex-slaves could now legally marry and family ties strengthened.

Most slaves went to school to learn to read and write. Adults and children flocked to Freedman’s Schools.

Many northern charities funded these schools.

CONTRACT SYSTEM – a person that did not own land could contract to work the land for someone else who owned it.
Without their own property, many ex-slaves returned to work on plantations. They were paid for their labor.

Ex-slaves could now choose the best contracts for jobs. Very low wages were paid – some were cheated out of wages and benefits.

The drawbacks to this system made many turn to sharecropping.

SHARECROPPING – a worker rented a plot of land to farm.

The landowner provided the tools, seed and housing.

Sharecroppers bought food and clothes on credit at the landowner’s store, owning a lot of money at harvest time.

Often a farmer had to use one year’s harvest to pay the previous year’s bill.

Many sharecroppers were caught in a cycle of debt, they often owned more than they made each year.
African Americans faced poverty and violent racism in the South. Officially slaves were given their freedom but in many regards things were still difficult in terms of living their lives.

The KKK attacked African Americans, burned homes and killed people. Klansman scared people away from voting, Democrats increasing their power.

KKK – KU KLUX KLAN – a secret group with goals to restore Democratic control and keep former slaves powerless.

THE END