



Student Name:

Class Period:

Date:

## Meet the Originals

*Texas Originals* is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on Norris Wright Cuney. Then, answer questions about it.

### Norris Wright Cuney 1846–1898

African American leader Norris Wright Cuney forged a remarkable career in post-Civil War Texas. Born into slavery in 1846, he nonetheless studied law and became a civic and political force in the years following Reconstruction.

Cuney was the child of Adeline Stuart, who was enslaved on a Hempstead plantation, and Stuart's enslaver, Philip Minor Cuney. At thirteen, Cuney's father freed him and sent him north for education.

Following the Civil War, Cuney returned to Texas, to the bustling port city of Galveston, then Texas's most cosmopolitan city. There, he steadily gained experience and political sway. Over the course of his career, he served as city alderman, collector of customs, and school inspector for Galveston County. In 1886 he was named the Republican Party's national committeeman from Texas.

Cuney used his education, political connections, and wealth to improve the lives of formerly enslaved people in Texas. He worked to establish and fund schools and colleges for Black Texans and opposed segregation in public schools. He also helped organize and lead the African American Masons. In the 1880s, he helped Black laborers loading cotton on the Galveston docks form their own union and fight for equal pay.

Cuney died in 1898, but is still remembered in Galveston, where the city's Wright Cuney Park stands as a monument to this extraordinary civic leader.

**Check for Understanding:** Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Norris Wright Cuney. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. What occupations did Norris Wright Cuney hold during his career?
2. What did Cuney do to improve the lives of formerly enslaved Texans?

**Going Further:** Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Making Inferences.** Why do you think Cuney focused on supporting education for formerly enslaved people in Texas?