African American History

I INTRODUCTION

Martin Luther King, Jr.
Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged as a leader of the American civil rights movement after organizing the famous 1955 bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama. Throughout his career he pressed for equal treatment and improved circumstances for blacks, organizing nonviolent protests and delivering powerful speeches on the necessity of eradicating institutional racial inequalities. In 1963 King led a peaceful march between the Washington Monument and the Lincoln Memorial, where he delivered his most famous speech, "I Have a Dream."

African American History or Black American History, a history of black people in the United States from their arrival in the Americas in the 15th century until the present day. In 2000, 34.7 million Americans, about one out of every eight people in the United States, were black. Although blacks from the West Indies and other areas have migrated to the United States in the 20th century, most African Americans were born in the United States, and this has been true since the early 19th century. Until the mid-20th century, the African American population was concentrated in the Southern states. Even today, a little over half of all African Americans live in the South. Blacks also make up a significant part of the population in most urban areas in the eastern United States and in some mid-western and western cities as well.

II AFRICAN HERITAGE

Africans and their descendants have been a part of the story of the Americas at least since the late 1400s. As scouts, interpreters, navigators, and military men, blacks were among those who first encountered Native Americans. Beginning in the colonial period, African Americans provided most of the labor on which European settlement, development, and

wealth depended, especially after European wars and diseases decimated Native Americans.

African workers had extensive experience in cultivating rice, cotton, and sugar, all crops grown in West and North Africa. These skills became the basis of a flourishing plantation economy. Africans were also skilled at ironworking, music and musical instruments, the decorative arts, and architecture. Their work, which still marks the landscape today, helped shape American cultural styles. They brought with them African words, religious beliefs, styles of worship, aesthetic values, musical forms and rhythms. All of these were important from the beginning in shaping a hybrid American culture.

III THE SLAVE TRADE

Captives in Central Africa
The first African slaves brought to the English colonies in America arrived in the early 17th century. They were captured in Africa and then transported across the Atlantic Ocean. It is estimated that more than 10 million people were brought from Africa to the Americas as slaves.
Hulton Deutsch

Portuguese traders brought the first African slaves for agricultural labor to the Caribbean in 1502. From then until 1860, it is estimated that more than 10 million people were transported from Africa to the Americas. The great majority were brought to the Caribbean, Brazil, or the Spanish colonies of Central and South America. Only about 6 percent were traded in British North America.

The Portuguese, Dutch, and British controlled most of the Atlantic slave trade. Most Africans taken to North America came from the various cultures of western and west central Africa. The territories that are now Ghana, Togo, Benin, and Nigeria were the origins of most slaves brought to North America, although significant numbers also came from the areas that are now Senegal, Gambia, and Angola. These areas were home to diverse linguistic, ethnic, and religious groups. Most of the people enslaved were

subsistence farmers and raised livestock. Their agricultural and pastoral skills made them valuable laborers in the Americas.

To transport the captured Africans to the Americas, Europeans loaded them onto specially constructed ships with platforms below deck designed to maximize the numbers of slaves that could be transported. Africans were confined for two to three months in irons in the hold of a slave ship during the crossing of the Atlantic Ocean called the Middle Passage. The meager diet of rice, yams, or beans and the filthy conditions created by overcrowding resulted in a very high death rate. Many ships reached their destinations with barely half their cargo of slaves still alive to sell into forced labor in the Americas.

The first Africans brought to the English colonies in North America came on a Dutch privateer that landed at Jamestown, Virginia, in August 1619. The ship had started out with about 100 captives, but it had run into extremely bad weather. When the ship finally put into Jamestown, it had only 20 surviving Africans to sell to the struggling colony. Soon many of the colonies along the Atlantic seaboard started importing African slaves. The Dutch West India Company brought 11 Africans to its garrison trading post in New Amsterdam (known today as New York City) in 1626, and Pennsylvanians imported 150 Africans in 1684.

IV SLAVES IN COLONIAL AMERICA

Slaves Picking Cotton
Cotton was the most important crop in the South before the American Civil War (1861-1865). Slaves usually worked all day picking cotton for their masters while overseers watched from their horses.
THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE/Corbis

A Occupation of Slaves

The vast majority of Africans brought to the 13 British colonies worked as agricultural laborers; many were brought to the colonies specifically for their experience in rice

growing, cattle herding, or river navigation. For example, South Carolina planters drew upon the knowledge of slaves from Senegambia in West Africa to begin cultivating rice, their first major export crop. In the South, slaves grew tobacco in Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina, and rice and indigo in South Carolina and Georgia. In the North, slaves also worked on farms.

African Americans, slave and free, also worked in a wide variety of occupations. They were household workers, sailors, preachers, accountants, music teachers, medical assistants, blacksmiths, bricklayers, and carpenters, doing virtually any work American society required.

B Slave Populations

By 1750 there were nearly 240,000 people of African descent in British North America, fully 20 percent of the population, though they were not evenly distributed. The greatest number of African Americans lived in Virginia, Maryland, and South Carolina because large plantations with many slaves were concentrated in the South. Blacks constituted over 60 percent of the population in South Carolina, over 43 percent in Virginia, and over 30 percent in Maryland, but only about 2 percent in Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. In the Northern colonies, enslaved people were much more likely to work in households having only one or a few slaves.

Virtually all colonies had a small number of free blacks, but in colonial America, only Maryland had a sizeable free black population. Over the generations of enslavement, at least 95 percent of Africans in the United States lived in slavery. But even as early as the 1600s, some gained their freedom by buying themselves or being bought by relatives. Since slavery was inherited through the status of the mother, some blacks became free if they were born to non-slave mothers. Others gained their freedom from bondage for meritorious acts or long competent labor.

C Slavery versus Indentured Servitude

Slavery was the most extreme, but not the only form of unfree labor in British North America. Many Europeans and some Africans were held as indentured servants. Neither slaves nor indentured servants were free, but there were important differences. Slavery was involuntary and hereditary. Indentured servants made contracts, often an exchange of labor for passage to America. They served for a limited time, commonly seven years, and generally received 'freedom dues,' often land and clothing, upon finishing their indenture. Although some slaves gained freedom after a limited term, others served for life, and a second generation inherited the slave status of their mothers. Gradually by the 18th century, colonial laws were consolidated into slave codes providing for perpetual, inherited servitude for Africans who were defined as property to be bought and sold.

In their day-to-day lives, slaves and servants shared similar grievances and frequently formed alliances. Advertisements seeking the return of slaves and servants who had run

away together filled colonial newspapers. When a slave named Charles escaped in 1740, the *Pennsylvania Gazette* reported that two white servants, a 'Scotch man' and an Englishman, escaped with him. Sometimes interracial alliances involved violence. During Bacon's Rebellion in 1676, slaves and servants took up arms against Native Americans and the colonial government in Virginia. In 1712 New York officials executed Native Americans and African American slaves for plotting a revolt, and in 1741 four whites were executed and seven banished from colonial New York for participating with slaves in a conspiracy. People in similar circumstances—poor and unfree whites, Native Americans, and blacks-formed alliances throughout the colonial era.

V AMERICAN REVOLUTION

A Black Participation in the War

Crispus Attucks
In 1770 Crispus Attucks, a fugitive slave, led an interracial group to protest British regulations in the American colonies. He was one of five American colonists killed when British troops fired into a crowd in what came to be known as the Boston Massacre.
Library of Congress

After the British defeated the French in the French and Indian War (1754-1763), the British began to change their relationship with their American colonies. They started to increase taxes, demanded that the colonists help pay for British soldiers stationed in the colonies, and controlled the colonial trade opportunities more carefully. Most colonists were outraged, particularly about the new taxes. They felt that Great Britain did not have the right to tax them, since it did not allow them representatives in Parliament.

Colonists, both black and white, worked together to fight what they saw as British injustices. Interracial mobs rioted against the Stamp Act of 1765 and other despised regulations imposed on the colonies throughout the 1760s. American protests targeted British officials and soldiers. In 1770 Crispus Attucks, a fugitive slave of mixed African and Native American descent, led an interracial crowd of sailors and laborers in attacking the British guard at Boston's customs office. They threw snowballs, chunks of ice, and stones; in response, the soldiers fired into the crowd, wounding six and killing Attucks and four others. For rebellious Americans, the Boston Massacre, as this event was named, symbolized Britain's armed determination to deprive them of their rights.

When the American Revolution began in 1775, all but 25,000 of the 500,000 African Americans in British North America were enslaved. Many were inspired by American proclamations of freedom, and both slaves and free blacks stood against the British. The black minutemen at the Battle of Lexington in 1775 were Pompy of Braintree, Prince of Brookline, Cato Wood of Arlington, and Peter Salem, the slave of the Belknaps of Framingham, freed in order that he might serve in the Massachusetts militia. Prince Estabrook, a slave in Lexington, was listed among those wounded in this first battle of the war. African Americans also served in the Battle of Bunker Hill, where former slave Salem Poor received official commendation as 'a brave and gallant soldier.'

At first General George Washington refused to recruit black troops. It was the British who made the first move to enlist blacks. In November 1775 Lord Dunmore, the British colonial governor of Virginia, issued a proclamation that all slaves belonging to rebels would be received into the British forces and freed for their services. Tens of thousands of slaves escaped from Southern plantations, and over a thousand fought for the British. Tye, 'a Negro who [bore] the title of colonel' led one interracial guerrilla band in New Jersey. In the South, such bands, called banditti, burned and looted plantations, stole horses, and liberated slaves, some of whom became British soldiers.

The demands of war eventually changed Washington’s mind, and he began to recruit black soldiers. Before the war was over, more than 5000 African Americans from every state except Georgia and South Carolina served in the Revolutionary army. Slaves, many serving in their owner's place, were promised freedom in return for their service. There were several black regiments like the Rhode Island Regiment and Massachusetts' 'Bucks of America,' but most African Americans served in integrated units, the last integrated American army units until the Korean War in the 1950s.

Thus, African Americans in search of freedom from slavery served on both sides during the Revolution. As a result of the Revolution, the population of free blacks in the United States increased-from about 25,000 in 1776 to nearly 60,000 when the first federal census was conducted in 1790.

B The Ideals of the Revolution

Slavery was important to American patriots. It was the opposite of liberty and served as a benchmark against which they measured their own freedom. They continually warned that they would not be denied their rights, saying they must not be the 'slaves' of England. The ideals of the Revolution emphasized the incompatibility of slavery in a free land, and slaves petitioned for their freedom using the words of the Declaration of Independence.

African Americans hoped that men who wrote such lofty words as “all men are created equal” would realize the immorality of continuing to enslave their fellow countrymen. 'We expect great things,' one group wrote, 'from men who have made such a noble stand against the designs of their fellow men to enslave them.'

However, the American Revolution and the American colonies' fight against British oppression did not bring slavery to an end. The words *slave* and *slavery* did not appear in the Constitution written in 1787, but the framers of the Constitution struck a compromise allowing the slave trade to continue until 1808. Slavery remained important to the economy of the new nation, and after the Revolution, it became more concentrated in the South.

VI THE CONCENTRATION OF SLAVERY IN THE SOUTH

American Cotton Plantation
Most of the agriculture in the southern United States during the early 19th century was dedicated to growing one crop—cotton. Most of the cotton crop was grown on large plantations that used black slave labor, such as this one on the Mississippi River.
Culver Pictures

In the North the rhetoric of the Revolution proved a powerful argument against slavery. Starting with Vermont in 1777, one Northern state after another either abolished slavery outright or passed gradual emancipation laws that freed slave children as they reached adulthood. Although abolition faced stiff opposition in areas of New York, Rhode Island, and New Jersey, where slavery was most economically significant, by the mid-1820s virtually all the slaves in the United States were in the Southern states. These states were becoming more dependent on slave labor as cotton became an important plantation crop.

In 1793 the invention of the cotton gin, a simple device that revolutionized the processing of raw cotton, dramatically increased the profitability of cotton cultivation. More slave labor was dedicated to cotton production; slave prices increased, and the value of cotton rose sharply. In addition, slavery spread southward and westward into the vast area acquired from France through the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. By 1815 cotton was America's most valuable export, and the economic and political power of cotton-growing states, often called the 'Cotton Kingdom,' grew correspondingly.

The need for slave labor, and thus the price of slaves, was much higher in states in the lower South, such as Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, than in the states of the upper South, including Virginia and Maryland. The result was a thriving domestic slave trade that devastated many slave households. Teenage boys and young adult men were especially desirable laborers for the new areas, and slave families in the upper South lost sons, brothers, and young fathers to the cotton plantations of the lower South. At the time of the Revolution, most slaves were held along the southeastern seaboard, but by 1860 the greatest concentrations of slaves were in the lower South.

Slave Quarters in the South

The dirt roads and simple wood houses of these slave quarters lay on the outskirts of New Orleans, Louisiana. The vast majority of slaves living in the United States were located in the South. After the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 and the spread of cotton cultivation in the South, the demand for slave labor on large plantations increased dramatically.

Archive Photos

The lives of slaves were greatly influenced by where they lived and worked. In Southern cities, slaves provided household services, labored for small businessmen and merchants, and sometimes worked as municipal garbage workers or firefighters. Both in cities and on plantations, skilled slaves did the carpentry, built and sometimes designed the buildings, crafted ornate furnishings, prepared elaborate meals, supplied music for planters' formal balls and parties, and provided services ranging from veterinary care to folk medicine for both whites and blacks. Plantations employed small numbers of slaves as household servants and some as skilled workers. Most slaves, however, worked in the fields. Plantation life, especially in the lower South, was hard and dangerous, but because of the larger numbers of slaves, it offered greater opportunities for establishing slave families and communities.

As the South expanded westward and as tobacco and rice cultivation gave way to cotton, the way slaves worked changed. In the 18th and 19th centuries slaves working on plantations in the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia often labored under the task

system. Typically, a slave was given a task each day and worked until that task was completed. Once the daily task was finished, the rest of the day was the slave's own. The work was extraordinarily hard, but the worker exercised some control over the pace of work and the length of the workday.

On large 19th-century cotton plantations, slaves usually worked in groups called gangs headed by slave drivers. The driver, who was generally a slave selected for intelligence and leadership ability, directly supervised the field laborers. Gangs worked the crop rows, plowing, planting, cultivating, or picking, depending on the season. Unlike those under the task system, these slaves had little control over their work schedule beyond the rhythm of the work songs that regulated the pace of their work.

The vast majority of white Southerners could afford no slaves and struggled for basic self-sufficiency, but many slaveholding planters were rich and politically powerful. By the 1850s there were more millionaires in the plantations from Natchez, Mississippi, to New Orleans, Louisiana, than in all other areas of the nation combined. By 1860 the 12 richest counties in the nation were all located in the South. The Southern economy depended on slavery, and by 1860 the U.S. economy depended on the Southern cotton that accounted for almost 60 percent of the value of all the nation's exports.

VII FREE BLACK POPULATION

A Discrimination Faced by Free Blacks

The first federal census in 1790 recorded nearly 60,000 free blacks, compared to more than 690,000 who lived in slavery. Although most African Americans lived in the South (about 90 percent), 27,000 lived in the North. South and North, free blacks tended to concentrate in urban areas, since cities afforded employment opportunities, greater freedom of movement, and larger concentrations of people to support churches, schools, and other organizations.

However, African Americans faced many obstacles and prejudices not encountered by whites, even in areas where slavery had been abolished. They were barred from most educational institutions, limited to the least desirable residential and farming areas, often prohibited from practicing trades and opening businesses, and generally segregated in public conveyances and public worship. Except in a few New England states where their numbers were small, black voting was restricted. In many states, especially in the Midwest, they could not serve on juries or testify against whites in court.

Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Iowa prohibited black immigration, and Illinois threatened bondage for blacks who attempted to locate there permanently. In 1807 Ohio passed a series of 'black codes' requiring free blacks to post a $500 bond assuring their good conduct and self-support before they could settle in the state. Although these restrictive laws were irregularly enforced, free blacks lived under their constant threat.

African Americans' job opportunities were always restricted, and poverty was a continuing problem. Ironically, black skilled artisans were more likely to find employment in the South than in Northern cities where they faced competition from European immigrants. Most free black men in the North worked as servants, as day laborers finding temporary work where they could, or as sailors aboard trading ships or whalers. Black women most often worked as maids, laundresses, or cooks in homes, hotels, restaurants, or other businesses.

B Free Black Communities

As early as the 1780s, African Americans in Northern cities established hundreds of mutual aid societies, churches, and fraternal organizations. Cooperative organizations provided benefits for burials and support for widows, orphans, the sick, and the unemployed. This aid was generally denied to blacks by white charitable societies. One of the first examples was the Free African Society, which was founded by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones in 1787. The same year Prince Hall organized the African Masonic Lodge in Boston, and lodges of Prince Hall Masons were soon found in Philadelphia, New York City, and throughout Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Churches were among the first black organizations established; they were the central institutions serving the community's sacred, social, and political needs. Despite white opposition, some independent black churches were organized in the South, generally with both slave and free members but with free ministers. In the 1770s David George founded the Silver Bluffs Church near Augusta, Georgia, and George Liele and Andrew Bryan established the forerunner of the First African Baptist Church in Savannah, Georgia.

In Philadelphia during the 1790s Jones and Allen established Saint Thomas African Episcopal Church and the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church respectively. Mother Bethel, as it was commonly called, was one of the country's largest Methodist congregations, with 1300 members by 1810. In 1816 black Methodists from the Middle Atlantic states formed the African Methodist Episcopal Church and named Richard Allen the first bishop of this association. Other early black churches included New York's African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church (1796) and the Abyssinian Baptist Church (1808), and Boston's African Baptist Church (1805).

C Early Abolitionist Efforts

By the 1830s, black communities had many groups organized specifically to oppose slavery and promote racial advancement. Schools and literary societies were common in the urban North, and virtually all black organizations were dedicated to abolishing slavery. In 1830 communities began sending delegates to an annual national Negro convention where they discussed strategies for abolition and racial advancement.

Although African Americans also worked with white allies in integrated antislavery organizations, they were determined to let their own voices be heard. They published political and historical pamphlets such as David Walker's militant *Appeal to the Colored*

Citizens of the World (1829). In 1827 John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish founded the first black owned and operated newspaper, *Freedom's Journal,* in New York. Ten years later Cornish became editor of the New York newspaper, *Colored American*.

Continuing discrimination and legal restrictions on social and political rights prompted some African Americans to leave the United States. Some emigrated to Africa, going to places such as the British African colony of Sierra Leone and Liberia, an area settled by freed American slaves. Other destinations included the West Indies, Mexico, or Europe. Paul Cuffe, a wealthy African American and Native American sea captain and shipbuilder from Massachusetts, promoted colonization in Sierra Leone and took a group of black settlers there in 1815. In 1816 the American Colonization Society was formed to resettle free blacks and freed slaves in Africa. White slaveholders were among its leaders, and most African Americans were suspicious, rejecting their overtures. Still, by 1827, the Society had taken over 1400 volunteers, mostly free blacks from the upper South, to Liberia.

African Americans were also likely to seek fuller freedom and safety from kidnapping or reenslavement by emigrating to Canada where slavery was abolished in 1833. The vast majority, however, remained in the United States, tied to their homes by kinship and a sense of entitlement. They hoped to gain citizenship rights and were committed to fighting for the freedom of those still enslaved.

VIII ABOLITIONIST MOVEMENT

William Lloyd Garrison
Abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison established The Liberator, the official newspaper of the antislavery movement, in 1831. He joined African Americans in calling for the immediate abolition of slavery in the United States.
Hulton Getty Picture Collection

The antislavery cause gained much more visibility in 1831 when white Boston newspaper editor William Lloyd Garrison and his newspaper, *The Liberator,* joined African Americans in demanding the immediate abolition of slavery. Though he was a pacifist, in 1831 Garrison published in his paper excerpts from Walker's *Appeal,* including its call for slave revolt. That summer a revolt led by Nat Turner, a slave, killed more than 50 whites in Virginia and increased slaveholders' conviction that such antislavery propaganda was dangerous. Southern states and local areas offered rewards for Walker, Garrison, and

Garrison’s publisher and newspaper agents, and prohibited the paper's circulation. Later that year, Walker died suddenly at his shop in Boston; many suspected foul play.

A Antislavery Societies

Sojourner Truth
Sojourner Truth employed her charismatic presence and oratorical skills to speak for the abolition of slavery across the United States. Freed from slavery in 1827, Truth encountered the abolitionist movement in 1843 and became the first black woman to crusade for abolition; she was received by U.S. president Abraham Lincoln in the White House in 1864.
Archive Photos

In 1833 Garrison’s supporters, both blacks and whites, organized the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS). In less than a year, this society had established 47 local chapters in ten states. Members worked to convince Americans that slavery was immoral and argued for immediate emancipation. They also provided aid to campaigns to end discrimination and programs to educate blacks. Their attempts to win over major religious denominations and Congress met with little success. Their speakers were denied access to many churches and meeting houses, and for almost a decade (1836-1845) Congress employed a 'gag rule,' refusing to hear their antislavery petitions. Racial fears and public antagonism prompted mob attacks on antislavery speakers and interracial gatherings.

Members of the AASS contended that the Constitution was a proslavery document. Therefore, they argued that slavery could not be fought with political strategies; it must be destroyed through moral arguments. Other members of the AASS wanted to work through political parties, even if it meant striking compromises with proslavery forces. They were also uneasy about Garrison's attacks on most churches for failing to speak out against slavery and his insistence on the full participation of women. In 1840 some abolitionists withdrew from the AASS and formed the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society. They announced their support for a new political party called the Liberty Party, which was founded in 1839.

Many other activists eventually supported working through political organizations to abolish slavery, including the most famous antislavery orator, Frederick Douglass. Douglass had escaped from slavery in 1838 and worked passionately for the antislavery cause. He joined other men and women, such as Sojourner Truth and Charles Lenox Remond, who traveled throughout the North testifying against slavery and organizing

moral and political opposition. Abolitionist women commonly organized fairs and concerts to raise funds for antislavery work.

B Underground Railroad

Escaped Slaves with Harriet Tubman
Harriet Tubman (far left, holding basin) was one of the most famous leaders of the Underground Railroad. Tubman herself escaped slavery in Maryland in 1849 via the Underground Railroad. She traveled to Pennsylvania, and once there she vowed to return to help other slaves escape. In 19 rescue trips, Tubman guided about 300 slaves to freedom without ever being caught. This photograph shows Tubman with a group of slaves she led to freedom through the Underground Railroad.
THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

Many members of interracial antislavery societies added their efforts to the work of black churches and other black organizations in a vast informally organized network known as the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad helped shelter and transport fugitive slaves who had escaped from the South. Most escaped slaves remained in Northern communities, but some fled to black settlements in Canada, where they would be safe from recapture. Although most slaves found aid from the Underground Railroad only when they reached the North, some were aided by such 'conductors' as Harriet Tubman who ventured into the South to lead people to freedom. Through this underground, fugitives from slavery also escaped to freedom in the West Indies, Mexico, and Native American territories in Florida and the West.

Abolitionist networks were also activated in cases like the *Amistad case*. In 1839, 53 captured Africans being transported to Havana, Cuba killed the crew of the ship, the *Amistad,* and captured the vessel. Attempting to return the ship to Africa, they were eventually taken into custody by American officials off the coast of Long Island, New York, and charged with piracy and murder. Antislavery forces convinced former President John Quincy Adams to defend them and publicized their plight in newspapers and public meetings. Black communities and antislavery activists mobilized to raise funds, producing

a play in New York, selling portraits of the leader of the captured Africans, Joseph Cinque, and holding antislavery events. After appeals, the Supreme Court finally freed those Africans who survived their two-year imprisonment on the grounds that they had been kidnapped in an illegal slave trade and had acted in self-defense.

During the 1840s black abolitionists became increasingly impatient with their slow progress and determined to widen the antislavery struggle. New Yorker David Ruggles called for slave uprisings in the pages of the *Liberator* in 1841. Black leaders began to more openly support violence to protect fugitives from being returned to slavery. But the growing power of the proslavery forces was signaled at the end of the decade when Texas joined the Union as a slave state.

IX THE CRITICAL DECADE OF THE 1850S

Growing conflict between Southern slaveholding interests and Northern antislavery activists prompted Congress to negotiate the Compromise of 1850. The act satisfied the antislavery factions on some points such as admitting California as a free state and abolishing slave trading in the nation's capital. However, it appeased the proslavery factions by including a new law to protect slaveholders' recovery of escaped slaves.

A Fugitive Slave Act

The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 was much stronger than an earlier 1793 fugitive slave law. Armed with a legal affidavit describing the fugitive, a slaveowner or his representative need only convince a federal commissioner that a captive was his property. No court or trial was necessary, and no defense was guaranteed. Particularly infuriating to blacks and other abolitionists was the provision that compelled bystanders to assist in captures or face fines and imprisonment.

Antislavery forces organized vigilance committees to protect fugitive slaves from the increased danger, and many were rescued from slavecatchers. For example, abolitionists spirited William and Ellen Craft out of Boston and sent them to England; a group of blacks burst into a Boston hearing room, freed Shadrach Minkins (known in Boston as Fred Wilkins) and carried him to Canada; a crowd in Syracuse overwhelmed jail guards and freed Jerry McHenry. There were also many unsuccessful rescue attempts, such as the cases of Thomas Sims in 1851 and Anthony Burns in 1854, both of whom were returned to slavery after reaching Boston. Such events generated public sympathy for the antislavery cause. Resistance to the federal law in Boston was so strong that 2000 soldiers were required to escort Anthony Burns to the ship that returned him to Virginia.

B *Dred Scott* Case

Dred Scott
Dred Scott was a slave who sued for his freedom after being taken to free territories by his master. In 1857 the U.S. Supreme Court denied Scott's petition for freedom and declared that African Americans could not claim U.S. citizenship.
Frederic Lewis/Archive Photos

Black anger and pessimism increased in 1857 when the Supreme Court ruled in the *Dred Scott* case. Scott, a slave, had sued for freedom based on his having lived with his master for two years in the free territory of present-day Minnesota. In a major victory for slaveholders, the Court not only refused Scott's petition for freedom but declared that blacks were not American citizens. Further, it decided that Congress could not bar slavery from the Western territories.

Such developments in the 1850s led blacks to become more militant and fueled renewed interest in emigration among a minority of African Americans. Converts to militant black nationalism included Martin R. Delany who led an exploratory expedition to Africa in 1859.

Harpers Ferry Insurrection
In 1859 white abolitionist John Brown led a raid on the U.S. arsenal and armory at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now in West Virginia). He hoped to free slaves by arming them and leading a revolt. In this sketch, U.S. Marines storm the arsenal, which was eventually recaptured. Brown was later convicted of treason and hanged.

Corbis

When white abolitionist John Brown laid plans to ignite and arm slave uprisings, he found many black supporters. Five African Americans were among the 18 men whom Brown led in a raid on the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia (now West Virginia) in 1859. Although the raid failed and Brown was hanged, black community gatherings commemorated John Brown's martyrdom, and many considered Harpers Ferry the first skirmish in a war against slavery.

X THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Company E, 4th U.S. Colored Infantry
Virtually all black soldiers fought on the side of the Union during the American Civil War. They served in segregated all-black units, like the one shown here, and fought in nearly 500 engagements. Twenty-four black soldiers and sailors were awarded the Medal of Honor for bravery, the U.S. military’s highest honor.
THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

At the start of the American Civil War (1861-1865), most white Americans in the North were not willing to fight to end Southern slavery. They fought instead to preserve the Union and prevent slavery from spreading into the Western territories. Many opposed expanding slave territory because they believed that slaves were unfair competition to free labor.

Many Southerners fought to protect and expand slavery because they believed that limiting slavery would lead to its destruction. Even most Southerners who did not own slaves considered slavery the essential foundation of 'the Southern way of life.' 'This country without slave labor would be completely worthless,' one soldier from Mississippi argued. Even though most owned no slaves, they would 'fight forever,' an Alabama soldier vowed, 'rather than submit to freeing Negroes among us.'

African Americans hoped the Civil War would bring about the abolition of slavery. In anticipation, they formed military units in many Northern cities in the 1850s.

War finally came in the spring of 1861, and eleven Southern states seceded from the Union and formed their own nation, the Confederate States of America (or Confederacy). The black military units offered their service to the United States, but the federal government initially refused to accept African American troops. Lincoln feared that doing so would encourage the slaveholding border states to join the Confederacy. As casualties mounted during 1862, however, U.S. military commanders sometimes recruited black soldiers without explicit authority. Finally in July 1862 Congress gave the president authority to use black troops.

In the South slave labor on farms and in factories freed more whites to fight in the war. The slaves, however, demonstrated their desire for freedom by escaping from Confederate plantations by the tens of thousands. In the beginning of the war, some Northern commanders returned slaves to their masters, and others forced escapees to work for the U.S. Army. Then, on January 1, 1863, Lincoln turned U.S. war aims toward slavery's destruction by issuing his Emancipation Proclamation freeing slaves held by those Southerners still in rebellion.

During the war, African American soldiers who served in the Union Army were paid less than white soldiers and suffered racist treatment. Confederates declared they would not treat captured black soldiers and their white officers as legitimate prisoners of war. Instead they threatened to treat captured black soldiers as runaway slaves and to execute their white officers. At Fort Pillow, Tennessee, Confederate forces commanded by Nathan Bedford Forrest, later an organizer of the Ku Klux Klan, murdered hundreds of captured black soldiers in 1864. 'Remember Fort Pillow' became a rallying cry for black soldiers who became more determined to defeat the Confederacy.

Black Volunteer Regiment
The North began recruiting black volunteers to fight in the Civil War in 1863. The Shaw Memorial (1884-1897), a bronze relief by American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, is a tribute to the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the first all-black battalion to go into battle during the Civil War. Captain Robert Gould Shaw, a 25-year-old Bostonian abolitionist, was chosen to lead the soldiers. A detail from the memorial, located on Boston Common in Boston, Massachusetts, is shown here.
Nikki Kahn/AP/Wide World Photos

By the end of the war, the United States had depended on the services of over 200,000 black soldiers and sailors, 24 of whom received the Medal of Honor.

In April 1865 the Union defeated the Confederacy, and slavery came to an end. President Lincoln acknowledged the critical role black troops had played in winning the war. A few days later, on April 15, Lincoln was assassinated, and Vice-President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee became president. In December of that year the states ratified the 13th amendment that formally abolished slavery. However, the U.S. victory and the end of slavery did not bring complete freedom to Southern blacks. Instead, the process of rebuilding the Union, known as Reconstruction, began.

XI RECONSTRUCTION

Waiting for Rations
Recently freed blacks line up for rations at a Freedmen's Bureau in the American South. The Bureau was formed in 1865 to provide food and medical and legal assistance to the newly emancipated blacks, as well as to needy whites. The program opened several schools and educational institutions before it was abandoned only a few years later.
Culver Pictures

Even before the war ended, the government had begun discussing how to deal with the aftermath of the war. In March 1865 the U.S. War Department established the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, commonly called the Freedmen's Bureau. The bureau was headed by Union General Oliver Otis Howard and furnished food and medical supplies to former slaves. It also established schools and helped former slaves negotiate fair wages and working conditions.

But when the war ended, the national government had not yet determined how best to reunite the country. Views on how to treat the defeated Confederacy varied. Some people felt that the South could be reconciled with the Union by simply acknowledging the abolition of slavery, while others were convinced that the region's social, economic, and political systems would have to be thoroughly reconstructed.

President Johnson, a Democrat from Tennessee, advocated leniency for the South. He granted amnesty freely to Southern whites, and his only requirement for readmitting a state to the Union was the adoption of a state constitution that outlawed slavery and disavowed secession. Encouraged by Johnson, Southern planters maintained much of their political power and passed black codes to restrict blacks' land ownership and freedom of movement.

People in the North became upset by the ease with which the Southern planters were reestablishing their dominance. Republicans in Congress fought with the president to change his Reconstruction policies. After the Democratic Party suffered a major defeat in the elections of 1866, the Republican Party took charge of Reconstruction, pursuing a more

radical course. Congress passed the 14th Amendment in 1866 (ratified by the states in 1868). It extended citizenship to blacks and protected their civil rights by forbidding the states to take away "life, liberty, or property, without due process of law."

In March 1867 Congress passed the Reconstruction Act which was strengthened by three supplemental acts later the same year and in 1868. The Reconstruction acts divided the former ten Confederate states into five military districts, each headed by a federal military commander. This created a federal military occupation of the former Confederate states. (Tennessee was exempt because it had ratified the 14th Amendment and was considered reconstructed.) Before applying for readmission to the Union, the Southern states were required to ratify the 14th Amendment and revise their constitutions to ensure that blacks had citizenship rights, including the right to vote.

In 1870 the states ratified the 15th Amendment. This amendment prohibited the denial of the right to vote based on race. Finally, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which forbade racial discrimination in "inns, public conveyances on land or water, theaters, and other places of amusement."

Federal occupation temporarily extended democracy in the South, assuring former slaves the vote and thereby enabling them to elect black leaders to political office. In states with the largest black populations, African Americans and their white Republican allies established and improved public education for white and black students, ended property qualifications for voting, abolished imprisonment for debt, and integrated public facilities.

In 1868 John W. Menard became the first African American elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Louisiana, where nearly 50 percent of the population was black. Congress refused to seat Menard, but others followed. In 1870 Hiram Revels of Mississippi became the first black person to sit in the U.S. Senate. In all, 20 blacks from Southern states served in the U.S. House of Representatives and 2 in the U.S. Senate during Reconstruction.

Black Congressmen
Shown in this picture are black congressmen from the late 1800s, including the first black person to serve in the United States Senate, Hiram Revels, far left, of Mississippi who served in the 41st Congress from 1869 to 1871. More than 20 blacks were elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate in the South during Reconstruction, the period of rebuilding after the American Civil War (1861-1865).
Archive Photos

In addition, hundreds of African Americans were elected to state and local offices in the South. In South Carolina, African Americans were almost 60 percent of the population, and at times they held the offices of lieutenant governor, secretary of state, treasurer, and speaker of the house. Although no state elected a black governor, Louisiana's lieutenant governor, P.B.S. Pinchback, who had once been denied a seat in the U.S. Senate, served as acting governor after the white governor was removed from office on charges of corruption.

Southern Democrats were determined to restore conservative Southern government. They charged Republican officials, especially blacks, with corruption. They cited rising taxes as evidence of wasteful spending. In reality, however, taxes rose as services such as public education were instituted for the first time or expanded in the South. The political corruption that characterized this era was led primarily by Northern business interests exploiting the government for their own ends, not by black Southern politicians.

To regain power in state governments, Southern Democrats used violence to keep black voters away from the polls. Throughout Reconstruction, the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist groups conducted terrorist attacks on African Americans and their allies to limit Republican political power and restrict black opportunities. Hundreds of blacks were killed for attempting to vote, for challenging segregation, for organizing workers, or even for attending school. In 1871 President Ulysses S. Grant declared martial law in nine South Carolina counties because of the proliferation of lynchings and beatings. In 1873 white terrorists massacred more than 60 blacks on Easter Sunday in Colfax, Louisiana, and killed

60 Republicans, both blacks and whites, during the summer of 1874 in nearby Coushatta. They killed 75 Republicans in Vicksburg, Mississippi in December 1874.

Even as Reconstruction ended, blacks continued to make some gains. In 1877 former slave and abolitionist, John Mercer Langston, became U.S. minister to Haiti, and Frederick Douglass served as federal marshal of the District of Columbia. During the late 1870s and the 1880s, several additional black colleges founded in the South joined Howard University in Washington, D.C., Morehouse College in Georgia, and Morgan State University in Maryland in broadening educational opportunities for black students. In 1888 Capital Savings Bank of Washington, D.C., opened as the first African American bank in the United States, and others followed in Richmond, Virginia; Birmingham, Alabama; and elsewhere in the South.

XII EROSION OF BLACK RIGHTS

Ku Klux Klan
Former Confederate soldiers founded the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) after the American Civil War (1861-1865). The KKK used violence and intimidation to keep blacks segregated and to prevent them from voting and holding office.
Archive Photos

Reconstruction came to an end gradually, as Democrats took over state governments from Republicans. In the last three states, South Carolina, Florida, and Louisiana, Reconstruction ended as part of an apparent political compromise. Both Democrats and Republicans claimed victory in those states in the elections of 1876. However, leaders of the national Republican Party agreed to recognize Democratic claims to state offices in return for receiving the electoral votes of those states for Republican presidential candidate Rutherford B. Hayes, who thereby won the election.

After 1877 Democratic governments were in power in all the Southern states, and they continued taking away black rights. This was done in many different ways—laws that

enforced the separation of blacks and whites, the sharecropping system that kept blacks economically dependent on whites, and the increased disenfranchisement of blacks. Northern whites were tired of spending time and money on the South. As a result, the discrimination and oppression of the African Americans in the South went largely unchallenged.

A Emigration from the South

Buffalo Soldiers
Buffalo Soldiers were black soldiers who fought in campaigns against Native Americans beginning in the late 1860s. Some African Americans joined the U.S. military as a way to leave the discrimination and poverty that they encountered in the South.
THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE/Corbis

By the late 1870s much of the optimism of emancipation had faded to the reality of the post-Reconstruction South. Thousands of blacks, landless and poor, decided to leave the South. In 1878 over 200 blacks sailed from Charleston harbor for Liberia in Africa. Many others decided to move west to the new territories that had been opened to settlement. In the 'Exodus of 1879,' sometimes called the Exoduster Movement, almost 20,000 blacks left Mississippi and Louisiana for the frontiers of Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado, and Oklahoma. They established a number of all-black towns like Langston, Oklahoma, and Nicodemus, Kansas, planted farms, settled in cities, and worked in mines.

Some blacks, especially those with Native American ancestry, found homes with Native American nations, and a few followed in the footsteps of black explorer and mountainman James Beckwourth, who had traveled throughout the West. In 1856 Beckwourth had published his memoirs entitled *Life and Adventures of James P. Beckwourth, Mountaineer, Scout, and Pioneer*. Some African Americans went west with the U.S. military, as part of the all-black Ninth and Tenth Cavalry Units that Native Americans called Buffalo Soldiers. Others went with wagon trains or as cowboys, moving cattle to market.

B Jim Crow Laws

The 1880s witnessed a profusion of segregationist legislation, separating blacks and whites. The system of Southern segregation was often called the Jim Crow system, after an 1830s minstrel show character. This character, a black slave, embodied negative stereotypes of blacks. One after another, Southern states passed laws segregating blacks and restricting African American rights in almost every conceivable way. For example, Tennessee initiated segregated seating on railroad cars in 1881. Florida (1887), Mississippi (1888), and Texas (1889) followed. In Alabama, laws prohibited blacks and whites from playing checkers together; in Louisiana, statutes ordered that there be separate entrances for blacks and whites at circuses. All Southern states prohibited interracial marriages.

Conditions for blacks in the South deteriorated further when the Supreme Court ruled against federal guarantees of African American rights. In 1883 the Court declared the Civil Rights Law of 1875 unconstitutional. In a series of cases, the Court also drastically undermined the 14th Amendment's protection of black citizenship rights and narrowed federal protection of the right to vote guaranteed by the 15th Amendment. Finally in 1896 the Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation was legal.

C Sharecropping

Reconstruction failed to eliminate black economic dependency largely because it did not provide African Americans with the land they needed to be independent. During the war, former slaves believed that they had earned the right to abandoned or confiscated Confederate lands through generations of uncompensated labor. Holding land might bring economic independence, and initially, it seemed as if the government might support their claim.

In January 1865 Union General William T. Sherman had issued Special Field Order No. 15, setting aside abandoned lands on the sea islands and the coastal region of South Carolina and Georgia for exclusive use of the region's freed population. Former slaves were given temporary titles to 40-acre plots of land with the promise that the titles would be made permanent by appropriate legislation. However, President Johnson reversed Sherman's order and ordered the abandoned plantations to be returned to their former owners.

By the 1880s a majority of former slaves had become sharecroppers, often working land that belonged to their former masters for a share of the profits. As Republicans in the South were driven from office or killed by terrorists, sharecroppers were left without protection and were frequently cheated by white landowners. Laws forced debtors to work the land until debts were paid, and landowners often manipulated credit to insure that sharecroppers ended each year in debt. Those who questioned the landowner’s accounting might be arrested for bad debt. Those convicted were often leased out to work on the same plantation, but without wages. Landowners in need of laborers might have local police invoke vagrancy laws against blacks who refused low-paying jobs.

D Increased Disfranchisement

White Southerners also increased their domination in the South by denying blacks the right to vote. Because the 15th Amendment to the Constitution prohibited denying the right to vote based on race, white Southerners developed other ways to disfranchise blacks. Beginning in Mississippi in 1890, they passed laws making it more difficult to vote, such as those that required a person to pay a poll tax or pass a literacy test. These laws discriminated against blacks who were often poor and illiterate, and many were removed from the voting rolls. Officials exempted poor whites who could pass the 'good conduct test' by having a person of good standing in the community vouch for them. After 1898, Southern states adopted 'grandfather clauses,' which allowed illiterate and propertyless men to vote if their grandfathers had been eligible to vote prior to the abolition of slavery in 1865. Almost no blacks could meet this requirement.

Perhaps the most effective barrier to black political power was the white primary election. The primary determined the candidates who would run in the general election, but since the Democratic Party was the majority party, the candidates that it nominated in its primary always won the election. Primaries were the real election. Beginning in the 1890s Democrats were able to bar blacks from voting in the primary on the pretext that the party was a private club and thus not subject to federal laws prohibiting discrimination.

As Democrats reasserted political authority in the South, African Americans had few legal or humanitarian protections. Throughout Reconstruction, blacks were hanged without formal charge or trial. The reported lynchings increased from about 50 a year in the early 1880s, to about 75 a year in the mid-1880s, and averaging well over 100 a year during the 1890s. Between 1890 and 1900 more than 1200 African American men and women were lynched in the United States. Thus, by the end of the 19th century, Southern black people lived under the constant threat of terrorism, were denied access to public facilities supported by their taxes, were relegated to the worst schools, and labored under an unjust economic system enforced by discriminatory laws.

XIII AFRICAN AMERICAN RESPONSES

A Rise of Populism

In the 1890s black farmers and white farmers, joined by common poverty and unjust treatment from wealthy planters and business interests, attempted to construct an interracial political alliance. This populist movement (*see* Populism) organized a political party, the People’s Party, and recruited blacks, some of whom were still voting in the mid-1890s. The party advocated political equality, and white populist leaders such as Georgia’s Tom Watson spoke out against the poll tax and other measures that discriminated against blacks. African Americans saw the populists as potential allies against the racism that threatened their rights, and many risked their lives to campaign for populist candidates. Black minister H.T. Dole gave 63 speeches on behalf of Watson; in Georgia, 15 black populists were killed during the state elections of 1892. Some white populists saw African

Americans as allies in their campaign to take power from Southern Democrats and elected blacks to positions in the People's Party.

But the appeal of white supremacy was too strong. This coalition fell apart after 1896 as a result of intimidation and racist appeals to whites. The Ku Klux Klan's racist beliefs that all whites were superior to all blacks meant that whites were never at the bottom of society. In the end these beliefs were far more appealing than the prospect of an interracial political alliance.

B Racial Accommodation

Booker T. Washington
In the face of racial violence during the late 19th century, Booker T. Washington advised blacks to stop demanding equal rights and simply get along with whites. His willingness to accept segregation and inequality in exchange for economic advancement drew criticism from other black leaders, notably W. E. B. Du Bois of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).
Pictorial Parade/Archive Photos

African Americans debated the best response to the rising tide of racial discrimination. Black educator Booker T. Washington reacted to this erosion of rights by advocating a policy of racial accommodation. Washington, who had been born into slavery, believed that protest aiming for social integration and political rights was doomed to failure in the South. Instead, he urged blacks to acquire occupational skills for economic advancement. He argued that African Americans were the backbone of Southern labor and urged sympathetic whites to encourage manual and agricultural education for blacks to strengthen the Southern economy. With the financial support of wealthy white businessmen, he established the Tuskegee Institute (now Tuskegee University) in Alabama in 1881 to educate black workers.

Washington's school was remarkably successful, considering the racially hostile atmosphere. His accommodationist stance made him one of the most influential African Americans among powerful whites during the late 19th and early 20th century, but many blacks resented his seeming willingness to accept without protest the deprivation of African American rights.

Many college-educated blacks disagreed with Washington and pursued equality through political and social protest. Ida B. Wells, Mary Church Terrell, William Monroe Trotter, and W.E.B. Du Bois were among those who established such all-black groups as the African

American Council, the Niagara Movement, and in 1909, the interracial National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). They demanded their civil rights and worked against the Jim Crow system of segregation through the courts and, where possible, through politics.

XIV BLACK CULTURE IN THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

During the last quarter of the 19th century, black urban societies in the South grew as many agricultural workers sought work and the relative safety of the city. Black women in particular found jobs as domestics in the homes of the growing white middle class. A few African Americans found work in the new Southern textile mills and tobacco factories, but most of those jobs were reserved for whites. Generally, Southern blacks in the cities, like those in rural areas, teetered on the edge of poverty, although such Southern cities as Washington, D.C., Baltimore, New Orleans, Memphis, and Atlanta had small but significant black middle class communities.

As black urban communities grew, they offered a broader range of social institutions and educational opportunities. Cities attracted many blacks who had been educated at Howard, Fisk, Atlanta, Hampton, and other black colleges established during the 19th century. The growth in the size and literacy of the urban black populace stimulated cultural and intellectual activity. Blacks published newspapers and magazines in all substantial African American communities.

Paul Laurence Dunbar
The son of former slaves, Paul Laurence Dunbar was one of the first black American writers to receive national recognition. In 1896 he published Lyrics of a Lowly Life, a collection of poems written in the black dialect.
Library of Congress

The composers Scott Joplin and W. C. Handy and the poet-novelist Paul Laurence Dunbar were among the black artists who achieved prominence at the turn of the century. Many other lesser-known musicians and writers combined Western musical styles with rhythmic and melodic forms rooted in Africa and in slavery to create American jazz. This musical style reflected African notions of improvisation and community and developed distinctive regional styles, from the Dixieland popular in New Orleans and the western South to the more sophisticated sounds that became the cool jazz of the southern Atlantic states. As

blacks migrated to the West and the North, they carried these regional musical styles with them.

XV THE GREAT MIGRATION

During the first decade of the 20th century, the infestation of Southern cotton crops by insects called boll weevils diminished production and curtailed the need for farm labor. Growing unemployment and increasing racial violence encouraged blacks to leave the South. Soon after, in 1914, World War I broke out in Europe. Although the United States did not enter the war until 1917, its factories supplied the combatants. American industry needed labor, and the war slowed European immigration. In response, Northern manufacturers recruited Southern black workers to fill factory jobs. From 1910 to 1930 between 1.5 million and 2 million African Americans left the South for the industrial cities of the North. By 1930 more than 200,000 blacks had moved to New York, about 180,000 to Chicago, and more than 130,000 to Philadelphia.

The sudden influx of newcomers to established Northern black communities brought not only new vitality but also new problems. Tensions grew between long-time black residents and the new emigrants, who were generally poor and sometimes illiterate. Cheap taverns and dance halls sprang up to cater to them, and they established new churches (often storefront quarters) that rivaled older more traditional black churches.

As black communities in Northern cities grew, black working people became the clientele for an expanding black professional and business class, gaining in political and economic power. This new black leadership replaced traditional leaders whose status often depended on their connection to influential whites. New leaders were more likely to have power based in the black communities and were freer to express a sense of racial pride and solidarity with working class African Americans.

Under these conditions, many social conflicts gradually gave way to an increasing sense of racial pride and social cohesion. While Jim Crow laws and political terrorism continued to discourage blacks from voting in the South, African Americans in Northern cities became an important political force. Black fraternal orders, political organizations, social clubs, and newspapers asserted an urban consciousness that became the foundation for the militancy and African American cultural innovations of the 1920s.

XVI WORLD WAR I

A. Philip Randolph
A. Philip Randolph was an American civil rights activist and labor leader who opposed World War I. After the war, he organized the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925. The union made advances against unfair treatment of black workers.
Archive Photos

With America’s entrance into World War I the military needs drained manpower from Northern industries. Increasing job vacancies enticed more black migrants to urban industrial centers, and for the first time, substantial numbers of black women held industrial jobs. Thousands of black women worked in industrial plants producing goods for the war effort and for a growing domestic consumer market. Most appreciated the higher pay and greater autonomy compared to domestic work. As black communities in the North grew, so did opportunities for blacks, more of whom became politicians, newspaper publishers, real estate brokers, insurance agents, lawyers, and teachers, serving the black communities.

African Americans also went to war; approximately 400,000 black soldiers served in the armed forces. Over half of the African American men who served in the war were stationed in France. They served in segregated units, and most were assigned as cooks, laborers, cargo handlers, or to other noncombat support positions, but some black regiments saw extensive combat duty. Some black regiments were recognized for their achievements; the entire 369th regiment—along with some members of the 370th, 371st, and 372nd regiments—was awarded the Croix de Guerre by France for distinguished service.

Despite their demonstrated military proficiency and bravery, black soldiers were insulted and harassed by white soldiers. Some American military officials attempted to establish the Jim Crow system in France. General John Pershing, commander of the Allied forces, issued a document called 'Secret Information Concerning the Black American Troops.” This document warned French military leaders against treating black soldiers as equals, but French people were unconcerned about such American practices and often welcomed black soldiers as heroes.

Most black leaders supported America's involvement in the war, but not all agreed. Labor leader A. Philip Randolph and socialist Chandler Owen vigorously opposed World War I and were sentenced to over two years in jail for publishing their views. Leaders were united, however, in the view that blacks' wartime sacrifices entitled them to first-class citizenship. At the end of the war, African Americans were determined to demand respect from the nation for which they had fought.

XVII THE POSTWAR YEARS

Marcus Garvey
Marcus Garvey organized the United Negro Improvement Association as a foundation to allow black Americans to move back to Africa. Failure to secure enough investment caused his ventures to collapse in 1922. Garvey was convicted of mail fraud the following year and deported to Jamaica in 1927 after U.S. President Calvin Coolidge commuted his sentence.
Culver Pictures

As African American veterans returned home, white opposition to wartime gains intensified. In 1917 a white mob invaded the black community in East Saint Louis, Illinois, and killed hundreds of African Americans. During the same year, the U.S. Army summarily court-martialed a group of black soldiers and hanged 13 without the benefit of an appeal after a black battalion rioted in reaction to white harassment in Houston, Texas. After the war, many black soldiers in uniform were attacked or killed by whites attempting to enforce racial domination. During the 'Red Summer' of 1919, antiblack riots occurred in scores of cities including Longview, Texas; Washington, D.C.; and Chicago, Illinois. These attacks continued into the 1920s and made African Americans even more determined to militantly defend their rights.

College-educated blacks were still few in number, but they generally provided articulate political and cultural leadership. Black leaders were united in believing that blacks' wartime sacrifices entitled them to first-class citizenship. Younger African Americans exemplified a militant "New Negro" who demanded respect and full equality from America and refused to take no for an answer.

The most popular militant black leader during this period was a Jamaican immigrant named Marcus Garvey who established the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), an international organization, in 1914. The UNIA had two to four million members at its height. Garvey was an outspoken critic of racial injustice, who appealed to black pride and identified with black working classes and the poor. His public appearances in New York's Madison Square Garden and elsewhere attracted tens of thousands of people.

Garvey was also highly critical of what he considered elitist middle class black leadership. He was particularly opposed to the integrated NAACP and to W.E.B. Du Bois, the editor of its *Crisis* magazine. In return, black civil rights leaders sharply criticized Garvey. His popularity and militancy also led to his surveillance by the U.S. government. In 1922 Garvey was arrested for mail fraud in connection with a steamship line he had established

to pursue trade with Africa. His subsequent conviction and imprisonment, and his deportation in 1927, sent the UNIA into rapid decline.

A The Harlem Renaissance

Zora Neale Hurston
American writer and folklorist Zora Neale Hurston is known for her interpretations of African American folktales and for her novels focusing on southern black culture in the United States. Her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God was published in 1937.
Huynh Cong/AP/Wide World Photos

Marcus Garvey’s career was part of the growth in racial pride and awareness that characterized the 1920s. During this period Harlem, a neighborhood in New York City, became the North's largest and the world's best-known African American community. It was the home of the Harlem Renaissance, a black cultural community of intellectuals, poets, novelists, actors, musicians, and painters. This community included Alain Locke, a Harvard graduate and Rhodes scholar, who was one of several black academics who promoted African American and African culture. Other important figures were Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay. Their work was publicized by white patrons and black newspaper and magazine editors and found a wide audience in the United States and Europe. Although Harlem was the most widely known center of U.S. black culture, the cultural renaissance flourished in other cities with substantial black populations such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

The growth of black communities in the North also led to greater black political influence. Black politicians were elected to many state and local offices in the North. In 1928 Chicago's Oscar DePriest became the first African American from outside the South to serve in Congress. Political organizations represented the interests of both the emerging black middle class and those of less affluent blacks, an example of the racial pride and unity with which African Americans met white racism.

B The Great Depression

Evicted Sharecroppers
Sharecroppers evicted from their homes camp along a highway in rural Missouri in the 1930s. Poverty and social upheaval severely affected black communities during the Great Depression.
UPI/CORBIS-BETTMANN

The African American cultural renaissance lost momentum in the 1930s as people focused on the Great Depression, a worldwide economic downturn that began in 1929. Even before the depression, unemployment and poverty among blacks were high, but the economic downturn devastated black communities. The economy was bad for everyone—17 percent of whites could not support themselves by 1934. Yet, 38 percent of African Americans were unable to support themselves by that year because large numbers of blacks were often fired to make room for unemployed white workers. African Americans lost their jobs at a much higher rate than whites and remained out of work longer. In some black communities 80 percent of the people were on relief, receiving surplus food, clothing, and other aid from the government, and black unemployment ranged as high as 60 percent.

These statistics translated into a falling standard of living for African Americans that was more drastic than for their fellow white citizens. The median annual black family income in Harlem dropped by nearly half between 1929 and 1932, and wage levels were lower for blacks than for whites. Businesses took advantage of the situation. One Philadelphia laundry, for example, advertised for black female workers at $9 to $10 weekly and for white female workers at $12. At the same time, Harlem landlords could charge rents of $12 to $30 a month, higher than comparable housing elsewhere, because Harlem was one of the few places where blacks could live.

But since the depression hit both blacks and whites, it made interracial action and reform more feasible. Unemployed veterans of World War I, both black and white, organized the Bonus Expeditionary Force to protest economic conditions. About 20,000 veterans took part in the Bonus March on Washington in the spring and summer of 1932, demanding early payment of their veteran's benefits. In the South, black and white tenant farmers

and sharecroppers worked together to demand fair treatment and a greater share of farm profits. A few blacks were drawn to the Communist Party when it recruited their support and ran a black candidate, James Ford, for vice-president in 1932, 1936, and 1940.

The labor movement was another area where blacks and whites worked together. All-black organizations, such as the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, led by A. Philip Randolph, worked with the industrial unions that joined the interracial Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) to forge a new, more militant labor movement. Labor unions played an important role in forming the National Negro Congress, headed by Randolph, which was organized to promote black economic interests.

XVIII THE NEW DEAL

Mary McLeod Bethune
American educator Mary Bethune became the first black woman to head a federal agency when she served as the director of the Division of Negro Affairs in the National Youth Administration from 1936 to 1944.
Culver Pictures

To counteract the effects of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated a domestic program called the New Deal. Roosevelt's New Deal was a series of government programs designed to adjust the economy in ways that would increase employment. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt encouraged the organization of a 'Black Cabinet' composed of notable African Americans to help shape New Deal programs.

Generally these black advisers were not politicians but community leaders, such as educator Mary McLeod Bethune, social worker Lawrence A. Oxley, and poet Frank S. Horne. Some held official positions in the Roosevelt administration. William H. Hastie, dean of the Howard University Law School, was appointed assistant solicitor in the Department of the Interior and later became aide to the Secretary of War. Ralph Bunche worked in the State Department, and Bethune was director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration. By the mid-1930s, Roosevelt had appointed 45 African Americans to serve in his New Deal agencies.

The New Deal had mixed results in the black community. Federal relief programs provided financial aid to desperately poor blacks, jobs for many, and government-financed housing. Some black workers benefited from administration efforts to protect industrial workers when New Deal policies guaranteed unions the right to strike. Many more benefited from

consumer strikes and boycotts that black leaders organized to force white businesses to hire black workers. In New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and other cities, thousands of blacks participated in “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” campaigns. In New York’s Harlem, for example, boycotts led to many more clerical, sales, and executive jobs for African Americans. Working together during the New Deal strengthened long-standing alliances between blacks and white liberals. These alliances were a foundation for subsequent civil rights reforms.

Ralph Bunche
Ralph Bunche was one of the many of the African Americans who worked in the federal government during the New Deal of the 1930s. He held a position in the State Department. In 1950 Bunche became the first black man to win the Nobel Peace Prize after negotiating a settlement to the Arab-Israeli disputes of 1948 and 1949.
UPI/THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

Yet, New Deal programs maintained racial segregation, especially in the South, and by the end of Roosevelt's second term, black unemployment was still extremely high. Further, the Roosevelt administration was reluctant to confront the legal segregation faced by Southern blacks, and New Deal programs did not help those hurt by the decline in agricultural prices. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) aided farm owners but did little for farm workers, some of whom were fired when the federal government provided financial incentives to cut farm production.

The Social Security Act brought assistance to many workers, but it excluded farmers and domestics—65 percent of all African American workers. Similarly, the bulk of black workers were not covered by National Recovery Administration codes (*see* National Industrial Recovery Act). Additionally, many federal housing programs perpetuated residential segregation. Roosevelt also declined to support proposed federal legislation against lynching and did little to relieve discrimination against blacks in federal relief programs.

One of the most dramatic developments that took place during the 1930s was the realignment of black voters. Blacks in large numbers switched their votes to the Democratic Party, deserting the Republican Party, the party of Lincoln that blacks had supported since Reconstruction. This shift took place partly as a result of blacks’ involvement in labor unions that generally supported the Democrats, and partly in response to Republican efforts to attract Southern segregationists. By the 1934 congressional elections, two years after Roosevelt won the presidency, most blacks voted Democratic for the first time.

Thurgood Marshall
As a litigator for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Thurgood Marshall worked to overturn segregation. He argued many important civil rights cases, including Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. His arguments greatly influenced the Supreme Court's decision to outlaw racial segregation in schools in the United States.
Archive Photos

During the 1930s, the NAACP led a vigorous legal battle against discrimination, concentrating on ways to end legal segregation, especially in education. The legal strategy for this battle was formulated by Charles Houston, former dean of the Howard University Law School, and Thurgood Marshall, a former student of Houston's. The NAACP focused on the 1896 *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* Supreme Court decision which had allowed separate facilities for blacks as long as they were equal to those provided for whites. Since they were almost never equal, the NAACP attempted to force Southern states to make them so.

The NAACP gained an initial victory in 1938 when the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the admission of a black man to the University of Missouri law school because the state had failed to provide such facilities for blacks. The next year, attacks on legal segregation were intensified as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund was created, and Marshall became its director.

Blacks and their white allies demonstrated their determination to fight segregation when the Daughters of the American Revolution refused to allow internationally acclaimed black singer Marian Anderson to appear at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. In protest, civil rights advocates arranged for Anderson to give an outdoor concert at the Lincoln Memorial. The symbolism was clear to over 75,000 blacks and whites who attended the concert on Easter Sunday 1939.

XIX WORLD WAR II

In the late 1930s and the early 1940s, the attention of African Americans focused on events in Europe—rise of dictators, Germany's invasion of Eastern Europe, and Italy's invasion of Ethiopia. Blacks protested Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and raised funds for Ethiopian relief. Black newspapers ran stories about the invasion, and the Pittsburgh *Courier* sent its own correspondent to North Africa to cover the story.

African Americans were also quick to recognize the danger of Nazism and its theories of Aryan superiority. To many, it resembled the segregationist rhetoric of the American South. At the Berlin Olympics of 1936, black track star Jesse Owens carried the pride of nonwhites as he symbolically confronted Hitler's theories. In races against Germans and other Europeans, Owens won four gold medals.

By the end of 1940, France had fallen to Hitler's forces, and Germany, Italy, and Japan had formed an alliance. Within a year, Japan had moved into China and Southeast Asia. The United States imposed trade sanctions on Japan, but these failed to restrain Japan’s expansion. On Sunday morning December 7, 1941, Japan attacked American forces stationed at Pearl Harbor and other U.S. military facilities on Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands. A black mess attendant aboard the USS *West Virginia,* Dorie Miller, was among those later cited for distinction during the battle. In the heat of battle, he pulled his wounded captain to safety. Although he had never fired a machine gun before, Miller shot down as many as four attacking planes, for which he later received the Navy Cross for heroism.

When the war began in Europe in 1937, there were only about 5000 black enlisted men and fewer than a dozen black officers in the regular army. Before the war ended in 1945, more than a million black men and about 4000 black women had served in the armed forces. Nearly half served abroad, most in Europe and North Africa, but thousands also served in the Pacific. African Americans served in all branches of the military during the war.

Attack on Pearl Harbor
On Sunday, December 7, 1941, Japanese aircraft attacked American forces stationed at Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor. During the attack, a black mess attendant, Dorie Miller, shot down at least four attacking Japanese planes. He later received the Navy Cross for heroism.
THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

In 1941 the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first black combat unit in the Army Air Corps, was established in Tuskegee, Alabama. More than 600 black pilots trained for this highly

decorated unit. They completed more than 500 missions in the first year of America's involvement in the war. Over 80 were decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross for combat over France, Germany, North Africa, and Eastern Europe.

Yet even as blacks participated in the war abroad, black military troops suffered all too familiar discrimination at home. In 1941, 100 African American officers were arrested for protesting the whites-only policy of the officer's club at Freeman Field in Indiana. In 1943 William Hastie, aide to the U.S. Secretary of War, resigned his office to protest racial discrimination in the armed forces.

By 1940 American factories were hiring new workers for war production, finally relieving the depression's stubborn unemployment. But blacks benefited less than white workers from rising employment and increased wages. Discrimination in employment and wage policies continued to create disadvantages for black workers.

Early in 1941, A. Philip Randolph met with Roosevelt administration officials to demand equal employment for blacks in industries working under federal government defense contracts. He threatened to lead 100,000 African Americans in a march on Washington, D.C., to protest job discrimination. Negotiations were heated, but finally Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 forbidding discrimination based on race, creed, color, or national origin in the employment of workers for defense industries with federal contracts. The order also established a Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to oversee the implementation of the order. Roosevelt's actions immediately opened thousands of steady well-paying jobs to black workers and encouraged a new surge of migration from the South to Northern cities.

The need for labor opened factory work to women and drew large numbers from the domestic jobs many had taken during the worst days of the depression. Working in war industries, black women found that the pay was better and the work was generally less physically demanding than domestic work. Also many black women who had lost domestic jobs to white women during the 1930s now returned to take those jobs as whites left them. African American men and women fully engaged in the war effort were determined to pursue a 'Double V Campaign,' victory over fascism abroad and victory over racism at home. Consequently, the pace of civil rights protest quickened during the mid-1940s.

XX POSTWAR CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVITIES

Richard Wright
One of the first African American authors to protest discrimination against blacks, Richard Wright wrote about white society's negative influence on black culture. His best-known work, the novel Native Son, which explores how and why a young black man is driven to murder, was published in 1940.
Archive Photos

The struggle against Hitler's theories of racial supremacy spurred some whites in the United States to accept racial equality. This acceptance was strengthened by the writings of numerous scholars, including the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal, author of *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944). Other scholarly and literary publications increased whites' understanding of the black experience, notably the novel *Native Son* (1940) by Richard Wright; *Black Metropolis* (1945), an important sociological study by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton; and *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947) by historian John Hope Franklin.

Drawing on increasingly liberal racial attitudes, the interracial Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), formed in 1942, conducted nonviolent sit-ins and demonstrations in Chicago, New York, and other Northern cities throughout the 1940s. These sit-ins challenged racial segregation and had some success at integrating public accommodations such as restaurants. Supreme Court rulings in the 1940s struck down many methods of segregation. In 1944 the court outlawed Southern Democrats' white primaries, striking down their argument that the party was a private club and primary elections were open to club members only. In 1946 it ruled that segregation in interstate bus travel was unconstitutional, and in 1947 it disallowed racial discrimination in the federal civil service.

The late 1940s also saw the color barrier fall in many areas of society that had been all white. One of the most dramatic instances occurred in 1947, when Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers, becoming the first black to play major league baseball in the 20th century. In 1949 Wesley A. Brown became the first African American to graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy.

Following the war, the GI Bill, funded by the government, gave new educational opportunities to veterans and promised greater economic prosperity. Blacks were determined to be included. Thousands of black veterans enrolled in technical training or colleges and universities, financed by government benefits. These black veterans paved the way for ongoing increases in African American college enrollments. The number of African American college students increased from 124,000 in 1947 to 233,000 in 1961.

Jackie Robinson
Jackie Robinson became the first black baseball player in the major leagues in the 20th century when he joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947. Robinson's entrance into the major leagues was an example of all white areas that were opening to blacks in the late 1940s.
Archive Photos

African Americans continued to migrate from the rural South to the urban North to improve their economic status. From 1948 to 1961, the proportion of blacks with low incomes (earning below $3,000 a year) declined from 78 percent to 47 percent; at the same time the proportion earning over $10,000 a year increased from under 1 percent to 17 percent. Although black income improved, it remained far below that of whites. Black median income in 1961 was still lower than white median income had been in 1948.

Whites reacted violently to the wartime movement of blacks to urban areas in the North and the West. By the late 1940s, as the black percentage of city populations increased, more and more whites moved to the new suburbs that often restricted black residence. Conflicts between black workers and white workers over housing and jobs developed in some cities. In Detroit in 1943, for example, 25 blacks and 9 whites died in a race riot before federal troops restored order.

XXI THE COLD WAR

The growing black population in Northern cities provided decisive support for liberal Democratic candidates who in turn backed civil rights reforms. Race became an important issue in postwar politics. In 1947 the NAACP presented a petition to the United Nations (UN). It documented the history of racism in America and was discussed for two days by the UN Human Rights Commission. President Harry S. Truman created a Presidential

Commission on Civil Rights. In response to pressure by black leaders, President Truman issued executive orders designed to eventually desegregate the armed forces and prevent discrimination in federal employment.

Southern Democrats were angered by Truman's actions and by Northern Democrats' adoption of a strong civil rights plank in the 1948 Democratic Party platform. They split from the Democratic Party and formed the States' Rights Party, whose members were known as Dixiecrats. African American influence on national politics was clear in 1948 when Truman was elected president after receiving only a minority of white votes.

The Cold War, which began during the Truman administration, also became a factor in postwar race relations. During the Cold War, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) engaged in an intense economic and political struggle for the allegiance of people around the world. As part of the Cold War, the United States began a campaign against Communism, the economic system of the USSR, both at home and abroad. The anti-Communist campaign had a mixed impact on black America.

In the world arena, the United States presented itself as the champion of freedom and democracy against the totalitarianism of Soviet Communism. The United States was embarrassed by its denial of rights to African Americans. Supporting black rights and appointing African Americans to prominent governmental positions bolstered America's claims.

At home, however, the campaign against Communism resulted in efforts to identify and prosecute Communists. From 1951 to 1954, Senator Joseph McCarthy and his Senate subcommittee investigated allegations of Communist activities. McCarthy charged many accomplished Americans with disloyalty, including black singer Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois. Such activities made it harder for people to express political dissent and to support progressive organizations for labor and black rights.

XXII THE BROWN DECISION

Desegregation in Little Rock
In 1957 nine black students desegregated Little Rock, Arkansas's Central High School, despite strong resistance by many white members of the community. President Dwight Eisenhower called out federal troops to enforce the desegregation and to ensure the safety of the students. Shown here are six of the "Little Rock Nine." With them, in the center of the picture, are Thurgood Marshall, then a lawyer for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and Daisy Bates, president of the Little Rock NAACP.
UPI/CORBIS-BETTMANN

During the 1940s and 1950s, NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall directed a carefully constructed legal campaign against Southern segregation laws. These laws separated blacks and whites in such areas of public life as schools, restaurants, drinking fountains, bus stations, and public transportation. The NAACP focused on segregation in education, and won a number of court victories, culminating in the Supreme Court's ruling in 1954 in *Brown* v. *Board of Education of Topeka.* This ruling declared that separate facilities were inherently unequal and therefore unconstitutional, thus reversing the 1896 *Plessy* v. *Ferguson* ruling.

However, President Dwight D. Eisenhower did not support a strong federal role in enforcing desegregation, an attitude that encouraged Southern resistance. State troopers were used in Texas to prevent integration; people who supported integration risked losing their jobs; and segregationists set off bombs in Tennessee and Alabama. In a 'Southern Manifesto,' 101 congressmen vowed to resist integration.

Meanwhile, after three years of negotiation, the black community and the school board in Little Rock, Arkansas, devised a plan to enroll nine black students at Central High School. When the plan was implemented in the fall of 1957, Governor Orval Faubus used the National Guard to block the black students from entering the school. The public outcry forced Eisenhower to act. He put the National Guard under federal direction and sent federal troops to enforce the Brown decision and protect the students from white mobs. Nevertheless, the following year, Faubus closed all of Little Rock's high schools rather than

integrate them. Ten years after the *Brown* decision, less than two percent of Southern black children attended integrated schools.

Whites in many areas of the South organized private white schools rather than accept integration. In 1959 officials in Prince Edward County, Virginia, moved white students and state education funds to hastily organized white private schools. For four years, until privately funded black schools could be organized, black students in the county had no schools. Finally in 1963 the county complied with court rulings and reopened the public schools. During the early 1960s, it was necessary to maintain federal troops and marshals on the University of Mississippi campus to ensure the right of a black student to attend classes.

XXIII THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

Rosa Parks
In 1955 Rosa Parks was arrested for disobeying a segregation law in Montgomery, Alabama, that required her to give up her seat on a bus to a white person. Her bold action helped to stimulate protests against inequality. The blacks of the community organized a boycott of the bus system and were led by Martin Luther King, Jr. They forced city officials to repeal the discriminatory law.
UPI/THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

The *Brown* decision energized other action in the Southern civil rights movement. One critical effort began in Montgomery, Alabama, in December 1955, when a black activist named Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man and move to the back of a city bus. Parks's actions were backed by the local NAACP, which organized a boycott of the city's buses. It asked a 26-year-old minister named Martin Luther King, Jr. to be the spokesperson for the boycott organization. The black community faced threats and violence but continued the boycott for more than a year until the Supreme Court demanded the integration of Alabama buses. In 1957 a group of ministers led by King formed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to continue organizing nonviolent actions against Southern segregation.

Inspired by the bravery of students integrating Central High School in Little Rock, in February 1960 four black college students in Greensboro, North Carolina took seats at the "whites-only" lunch counter in Woolworth's department store and waited to be served. They were refused service, but their sit-in continued. A few days later the number of students 'sitting-in' had grown to 150. Whites harassed and violently attacked the students, and the events were covered by newspapers and television. This coverage brought the demonstrators national attention, and protests spread quickly. During that year, 75,000 students—both black and white—staged sit-ins in 75 localities. Over 5600 protesters were arrested, 2000 of them for picketing outside Northern stores that had segregated Southern branches.

Sit-Ins in Greensboro, North Carolina
In 1960 four black college students walked into a Woolworth store in Greensboro, North Carolina, sat down at the "whites-only" lunch counter, and waited to be served. Their protest gained national attention, and soon sit-in demonstrations spread throughout the country with more than 75,000 students, both black and white, participating.
UPI/CORBIS-BETTMANN

In April 1960 Ella Baker, the executive director of SCLC, convened a meeting of student leaders to try to coordinate these local spontaneous demonstrations and establish a relationship with the students. The students formed a separate organization called the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), with its own leadership. SNCC adopted the commitment to nonviolence at the urging of King and other civil rights activists and worked with other civil rights organizations.

A Freedom Rides

Burned Bus in Anniston, Alabama
Freedom Riders began traveling through the South in 1961 to try to desegregate Southern bus stations. In this picture, Freedom Riders sit by their bus which was burned by a white mob in Anniston, Alabama. Several of the riders were beaten by the mob.
UPI/Corbis

In May 1961 SNCC and CORE set out to test compliance with a Supreme Court ruling that prohibited segregation in facilities for interstate travel. To do so, they revived a protest strategy CORE had used in 1947. They organized what became known as the Freedom Rides—bus trips throughout the South that attempted to desegregate buses and bus stations. After informing federal authorities of their plans, the Freedom Riders—seven blacks and six whites—set out from Washington, D.C., aboard two buses. Along the way, the freedom riders encountered violent resistance from whites. In South Carolina, whites beat and kicked two riders. In Alabama, whites attacked and burned one bus and severely beat riders in both buses, leaving one man permanently paralyzed. The riders ended their protest in Birmingham, Alabama; they were unprotected by the police and were unable to find a bus driver willing to continue the trip.

Route of the First Freedom Ride
In May 1961 the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized the first Freedom Ride, a bus journey by a group of young blacks and whites through the segregated South. The goal was to test the Boynton v. Virginia United States Supreme Court decision (1960) banning the segregation of

interstate transportation facilities. The riders met with increasing resistance as they moved South, including mob attacks, the firebombing of one of their buses, and imprisonment. The original group of riders was joined along the way by reinforcements from CORE and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Nearly three weeks after their departure from Washington, D.C., the riders finally arrived in Jackson, Mississippi, under heavy National Guard escort. The military protection, orchestrated by Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, demonstrated both the violent resistance and the national interest that their ride had provoked.

Then Diane Nash, a SNCC member, recruited other freedom riders, eight blacks and two whites, to try to complete the ride. Again they met with violence. This time the riders attracted more attention from the media, and White House officials ordered their protection by federal marshals and national guardsmen. Riders were nevertheless arrested and imprisoned in Mississippi for entering a "whites-only" waiting room.

B Nonviolent Protests

Martin Luther King, Jr.
During the 1950s, Martin Luther King, Jr. studied the methods of nonviolent protest of the Indian nationalist leader Mohandas K. Gandhi and successfully implemented them in a civil rights movement in the United States. King expertly led the movement and forced discussion of inequality in the United States. His work inspired thousands of blacks and led to long-range changes in the lives of countless others. In 1963, five years before his death at the hands of an assassin, King addressed a gathering of more than 200,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial in the nation's capital. There he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

Throughout the South, various types of nonviolent protests took place. Activists boycotted stores that refused to hire blacks, marched in protests against discrimination, and worked to change laws that enforced segregation. In 1963 more than a million demonstrators were involved in massive protests, and many demonstrators were attacked by whites determined to maintain racial dominance.

In the spring of 1963 SCLC began a campaign in Birmingham, Alabama to try to end segregation. The local police force responded with violence, turning fire hoses on demonstrators and attacking them with dogs. Federal troops were sent to quell the violence. In reaction to the attacks on the demonstrators, President John F. Kennedy introduced civil rights legislation designed to end segregation in public facilities.

The growing power of the civil rights movement was demonstrated on August 28, 1963 when more than 200,000 peaceful demonstrators marched on Washington, D.C. Protest leaders called for congressional action in civil rights and employment legislation, and Martin Luther King, Jr., electrified listeners with his 'I Have A Dream' speech. In November, President Kennedy was assassinated, and in the aftermath of this tragedy, the civil rights bill that had languished in Congress was passed in June 1964. Six months later, Martin Luther King, Jr., became the youngest person ever to receive the Nobel Peace Prize.

C Voter Registration

Beginning in 1961 SNCC and CORE organizers undertook a dangerous campaign in Mississippi, attempting to register black voters despite intense white resistance. By 1962 Robert Moses, a black Harvard-educated schoolteacher, had assembled a staff of organizers to work with local residents. To bring attention, and perhaps some protection, to their efforts, the workers organized the Mississippi Summer Project, also known as the Freedom Summer project. They recruited and trained over 1000 Northern volunteers—including African American and white students. These volunteers helped people to register to vote and ran freedom schools providing basic education and African American history. Within the first two weeks, two whites, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, and one black, James Chaney, were murdered. Fear and danger followed the remaining volunteers that summer.

The Summer Project increased the number of black voters in Mississippi. It also led to the creation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), a political party open to all races. The MFDP unsuccessfully challenged the seating of an all-white Mississippi delegation at the Democratic national convention. However, voting registration efforts were helped by a series of marches to demand black voting rights in Selma, Alabama, in 1965. The protests and the violence that accompanied them prompted President Lyndon B. Johnson to introduce new voting-rights legislation. Passed that summer, its impact was dramatic: in Mississippi, the percentage of blacks registered to vote increased from 7 percent in 1964 to 59 percent in 1968.

D Black Power and Black Pride

Malcolm X
Malcolm X was a militant leader of the Nation of Islam, a Black Muslim organization, in the 1950s and early 1960s. In contrast to other black religious leaders of that time who espoused pacifism, he called for achieving equality "by any means necessary." He was assassinated in 1965.

Years of Southern civil rights activism had increased black pride and militancy throughout the nation. The achievement of legislation for integration and voting rights focused attention on the remaining barriers to black freedom and opportunity—economic deprivation and continuing white resistance. Under the strain of constant attacks, black leaders such as SNCC chairperson Stokely Carmichael began to question the commitment to nonviolence and to argue for all-black leadership.

They were impressed by Malcolm X, the Northern leader of the Black Muslim organization who advocated black pride and armed self-defense. In 1966, the year after Malcolm's assassination, Carmichael raised the cry for black power. Many traditional civil rights leaders were appalled by the slogan. Martin Luther King, Jr., understood the slogan's appeal but feared its explosive potential and tried to emphasize black power's connotations for black pride and self-esteem. The slogan, however, resonated in the Northern inner cities. There housing discrimination restricted blacks' choices, and judging from poverty and unemployment rates, African Americans had never recovered from the Great Depression.

In August 1965 racial violence erupted in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles in response to the lack of economic progress and conflicts with white police. In the summer and fall of 1966, 43 cities experienced racial violence. That October, two black college students, Huey Newton and Bobby Seale, organized the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California to promote community service and armed self-defense for inner-city residents. One of its first actions was to establish patrols in black communities to monitor police activities and protect residents from police brutality.

The Black Panthers enjoyed wide appeal among young men in the Northern cities. The party quickly became a target for repression that included undercover informants and surveillance by the police and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). As Martin Luther King, Jr., began to speak out against American involvement in the Vietnam War (1959-1975) and to emphasize the need for economic changes, he too became a target for government surveillance and harassment. In the summer of 1967, major race riots erupted in Newark, Detroit, and other American cities. Often this violence was attributed to

tensions between black residents and white police accused of brutality. In February 1968 the presidentially appointed Kerner Commission reported that America was becoming 'two societies, one white, one black—separate and unequal.' In April, King was assassinated in Memphis, and the wave of racial violence that followed seemed to confirm those conclusions.

Members of the Black Panthers
The Black Panther Party was founded in California in 1966 to promote community service and armed self-defense for inner-city residents. Shown here, members of the Black Panther Party protest the arrest of Huey Newton, one of the founders of the party. The party was the target of police harassment during the 1960s, and several members were jailed at various times.
UPI/THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

While black leaders were debating the effectiveness of nonviolent strategies, the nation was becoming more involved in the Vietnam War. The war led to divisive national debates. In 1965, when President Johnson ordered air raids over North Vietnam, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party denounced the war and declared that black men should not submit to a war for freedom abroad when they did not have freedom at home. Many older civil rights leaders warned against alienating the Johnson administration by opposing the war, since Johnson had supported civil rights. Younger, more militant blacks were more likely to oppose the war; they joined the public demonstrations that became more frequent as troop levels in Vietnam escalated and as the number of black soldiers and casualties became proportionately higher than for whites.

XXIV THE STRUGGLE FOR ECONOMIC EQUALITY

During the late 1960s and 1970s, civil rights activists began to concentrate on eliminating the remaining barriers to black freedom and opportunity. Although segregation by law (de jure segregation) in the South had been defeated, segregation by custom (de facto segregation) still remained. In the South, legal segregation had been supplemented by

customary racial segregation, but even in the North where there generally were no segregation laws, custom enforced racial segregation.

African Americans had been barred from many restaurants, movie theaters, nightclubs, and other public accommodations by customary practice. Generally, landlords in white neighborhoods would not rent to black tenants, forcing them to pay higher rents in the only housing available to them in black neighborhoods. Banks denied financing, and real estate agents refused to show houses in traditionally white areas to blacks even if they could afford them.

Discriminatory hiring practices confined most black workers to the least secure, lowest paying jobs regardless of their qualifications. Those few opportunities open to black professionals like doctors, lawyers, and teachers were in positions and institutions serving the black community. As a result of limited opportunities, by the beginning of the 1960s, more than half of African Americans had incomes below the poverty line.

A The Poor People’s Campaign

Poor People’s Campaign
Ralph Abernathy is shown here, center, leading the Poor People’s Campaign march and encampment in Washington, D.C., in May 1968. The campaign was conceived by members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and was designed to focus attention on poverty and discrimination.
Archive Photos

SCLC leaders focused on the issues of poverty and discrimination, continuing the Poor People's Campaign that Martin Luther King, Jr., had begun. The Poor People’s Campaign sought the passage of federal legislation that would provide full employment, establish a guaranteed income, and promote the construction of low-income housing.

In May 1968 Ralph Abernathy, who had been King's lieutenant, established an encampment called Resurrection City on the Mall in Washington, D.C. It drew 2,500 mostly black and Native American temporary residents, nearly twice the number that organizers had planned on. Within a month, mud and unsanitary conditions produced by heavy rains reduced the encampment to fewer than 300 people. In June 1968 an interracial group of 50,000 marched in Washington, D.C., to demonstrate their support for the Poor People's Campaign. They were ultimately unable to gain the sympathetic attention of Congress and the country. At the end of the month, the demonstrators were ordered to evacuate, and on June 24th the police evicted the 100 who refused to leave amid clouds of teargas.

B Busing

School Busing
In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that segregation in schools was unconstitutional. One of the most common methods of desegregating school districts was busing, in which students were bused to schools outside their neighborhoods. Here, white and black students in Charlotte, North Carolina, arrive at an inner city school in 1970.
Bruce Roberts/Photo Researchers, Inc.

As civil rights leaders turned their attention to de facto segregation in the North, they devised a different strategy for improving educational opportunities for black students. Since schools were supported by property taxes, there were great differences in resources available for education between poorer inner cities and wealthier white suburbs.

Integrationists in some metropolitan areas devised temporary plans to bus children to schools outside of their neighborhoods as a way to integrate urban schools. Busing had been used for many years to maintain segregated school systems in the South, but whites opposed this new form of busing vehemently. They challenged the legality of busing in the courts, but these challenges were unsuccessful. The Supreme Court declared busing for educational integration constitutional, and many state and local courts ordered cities to develop busing plans.

These plans had their greatest effect on working class ethnic neighborhoods near inner cities. The newest, best-equipped schools, which were predominately in affluent white suburbs, were less likely to be affected. Busing raised parents' concerns about having their children attend school far from home. Although they welcomed the opportunities better schools provided, black parents, whose children were most often bused, worried about the students' adjustment to a strange and often hostile school environment. These concerns and continued opposition from many whites ensured that busing remained controversial through the 1990s.

XXV CONSERVATIVE BACKLASH

Jesse Jackson
By the 1960s Baptist minister Jesse Jackson had set himself at the forefront of the struggle for civil rights. In 1971 he founded Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) to work for the economic advancement of poor people. In 1984 and 1988 he campaigned for the Democratic presidential nomination. A gifted orator, Jackson electrified delegates at the 1988 Democratic National Convention with this speech.

Antipoverty programs and civil rights gains had positive effects: The black middle class grew and black unemployment shrank to under 7 percent in 1968 and 1969. In the early 1970s, however, rising inflation and an economic downturn caused widespread economic uncertainty among African Americans. To deal with difficult economic issues, a new generation of black leaders established new organizations. In 1971 Jesse Jackson founded Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) in Chicago to work for the economic advancement of poor people, and in 1973 Marian Wright Edelman began the Children's Defense Fund, an organization that lobbies for children's rights and welfare.

The contracting economy also provoked white opposition to programs that had benefited African Americans. White reaction to expanded black economic and educational opportunities was often harsh; white protestors burned buses, harassed black school children, and supported local politicians who opposed black equality. A surprising number of Northern voters supported the independent presidential candidacy of segregationist George Wallace in 1968 and 1972.

In response the campaign and then the presidency of Republican Richard M. Nixon turned away from civil rights. Nixon nominated people opposed to busing as judges on the Supreme Court, thereby beginning a shift to conservatism on the court. Yet, the nation's ambivalence was apparent in 1977 when 'Roots,' the serialization of Alex Haley's story of

generations of his African and African-American family, became the most popular television program in history and transfixed 130 million viewers.

A The Carter Years

When Georgian Jimmy Carter was elected president in 1976, he appointed more blacks to influential positions in the federal government than any president before him, and he seemed to have a deep personal commitment to racial equality. However, the economic situation deteriorated under his presidency. The Congressional Black Caucus labeled Carter's federal budget favoring military spending over domestic funding for social relief programs 'an unmitigated disaster' for black people. Black unemployment had remained in double digits since the mid-1970s, twice the rate for whites.

B The Reagan Years

The hostile reaction among social and economic conservatives to black progress continued to grow during the 1980s. In the presidential election of 1980, most blacks saw little alternative to supporting Carter over the Republican Ronald Reagan. Reagan was a conservative whose tax cutting, antispending policies as governor of California had caused hardship among the state's poorest citizens.

Reagan spoke to the racial and gender stereotypes of many conservative white Americans when he criticized those on welfare as taking advantage of taxpayer's money. He was committed to a smaller federal government and fewer federal resources for the poor. On election day, 90 percent of the black vote went for Carter, but Reagan won by a comfortable margin, especially in the South, where only Carter's home state of Georgia went Democratic.

During the Reagan administration, defense spending increased, federal tax revenues declined, the national debt reached an all time high, and governmental support for social programs dwindled. For African Americans, the consequences of these changes were alarming. To protest Reagan’s policies, 300,000 members of labor and civil rights groups organized Solidarity Day in Washington, D.C., in 1981.

By the end of the decade, the after-tax income of the richest one percent of Americans had increased by 87 percent, while the income of those at the bottom of the economy diminished. Black unemployment also grew during the 1980s; by 1990, more than one in every four adult black men between the ages of 24 and 54 were out of work. The rate was much higher for young black men in the inner city, and overall black unemployment was two-and-a-half times higher than white unemployment. In 1983 black unemployment stood at a record high of almost 21 percent. Correspondingly, the overall black poverty rate rose so that by 1989 almost one-third of all black Americans were below the poverty line, more than three times the rate for whites.

Rising unemployment and increasing poverty had tragic consequences for many African Americans. The percentage of black families headed by single women increased, and single-parent black households were almost twice as likely to fall below the poverty line as those with two parents and thus two incomes. The crime rate in America rose, and the effect was magnified in poor black communities. One study calculated that on any given day during the 1980s, 23 percent of all black men in the United States were under some form of judicial supervision. Military-style weapons and powerfully addictive drugs made gang violence more deadly and swelled the numbers of young people killed in the inner city.

Not only did poverty and unemployment and their deadly effects increase for black Americans, but the income gap between them and white Americans grew dramatically. That gap had decreased during the 1960s and early 1970s, but by 1984 the disparity had returned to the level it had been in 1960. Yet, some middle class blacks had become more economically secure, as the proportion of black households earning incomes of $50,000 or more rose 46 percent during the 1980s.

XXVI AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

Lyndon Johnson and Black Leaders
President Lyndon Johnson believed that affirmative action programs would help compensate for past racism and discrimination. On January 18, 1964, he met with prominent black leaders. From left to right are: Roy Wilkins, Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); James Farmer, National Director of the Congress of Racial Equality; Martin Luther King, Jr., head of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Whitney Young of the Urban League; and Johnson.
UPI/CORBIS-BETTMANN

During the 1960s the Kennedy administration devised a strategy to increase employment opportunities for minorities they called affirmative action. Originally affirmative action required contractors doing business with the federal government to take positive steps to

insure that employees were not discriminated against because of race, creed, color, or national origin.

Later, President Johnson argued that fairness demanded affirmative action to compensate for past racial injustice and discrimination. His Executive Order 11246 signed in 1965 augmented the Civil Rights Act of 1964, committing the federal government to seek not 'just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result.' Two years later, Johnson broadened his order to embrace gender equality as well. During the late 1960s and 1970s, the public and private sectors devised plans to increase the racial and gender diversity in work places and classrooms to bring blacks into jobs and schools where they had previously been denied admission.

By the late 1970s, the concept of affirmative action in higher education was challenged in the Supreme Court by Allan Bakke, a white student who had been denied admission to Davis Medical School at the University of California. Bakke charged that he had been the subject of 'reverse discrimination' because black students with lower academic credentials had been admitted to the school. Advocates of affirmative action pointed to the number of white students with academic records inferior to Bakke's who had been admitted to the school under so-called legacy admissions provided to the children of alumni. They argued that the university often considered factors other than grades in its admissions decisions. The Court ignored these arguments and ordered Bakke admitted. However, the Court upheld the concept of affirmative action, ruling that race could be considered in admissions in the interest of creating a racially diverse student body.

One year later the Court ruled that labor unions and businesses could design special programs aimed at helping blacks get jobs and promotions where it was shown that there had been 'manifest racial imbalance.' In 1980 the Court approved Congress's right to impose goals for minority representation as a means for increasing the number of minority and female contractors doing business with the federal government and to counteract past discrimination.

In the more conservative political atmosphere of the 1980s, the federal government shifted its stand on affirmative action and the protection of civil rights won in the 1960s. Under the administration of President Ronald Reagan, the Justice Department announced in 1981 that it would no longer require federal contractors to maintain affirmative action programs, nor would it enforce busing as a means of correcting discrimination in public education.

The Supreme Court continued to send mixed signals. In 1985 it declared that affirmative action programs designed to bring more minorities and women into state employment were constitutional. But, by the end of the decade, it had ruled against Richmond, Virginia's 'set aside program' designed to reserve 30 percent of the city's public work for minority contractors. It had not, however, specifically outlawed affirmative action programs as a method to redress past racial inequities.

Throughout the 1990s, affirmative action remained one of the nation's most divisive racial issues. Some people continued to see it as reverse discrimination and used the language of the civil rights movement to condemn the use of racial or gender preferences. California voters rejected the affirmative action programs that had helped integrate the state's university system. The state of Washington passed a similar initiative. Affirmative action plans in other states and in private industry were also attacked severely.

In 2003 the administration of President George W. Bush presented arguments before the Supreme Court in support of lawsuits that sought to end affirmative action programs at the University of Michigan. The Court, however, rejected the arguments and reaffirmed the goal of racial diversity in higher education. In its first major decision on affirmative action since the 1978 *Bakke* decision, the Court upheld an affirmative action program at the University of Michigan Law School, which considered race as one of many factors in selecting applicants. Although the ruling restated the diversity principle, the Court's majority opinion in *Grutter* v. *Bollinger* also noted that a permanent justification for racial preferences should not be enshrined. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, who wrote the opinion, called for a reevaluation of the need for affirmative action in 25 years.

XXVII POLITICAL AND SOCIAL GAINS

Carol Moseley Braun
In November 1992 Illinois representative Carol Moseley Braun became the first black woman elected to the U.S. Senate. A distinguished public servant, Moseley Braun garnered the Best Legislator Award during each of the ten years she served in the Illinois House of Representatives.
REUTERS/THE BETTMANN ARCHIVE

Despite obstacles, African Americans made political gains. By organizing at the state and local level, African Americans were able to increase black political representation. By 1968 nine African Americans, including the first black woman, Shirley Chisholm, had been elected to Congress, the largest number since 1875. Twelve were elected in 1970, and the following year they formed the Congressional Black Caucus for a stronger voice in federal affairs.

Colin L. Powell

In 1989 General Colin L. Powell became the first black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the nation's highest military post. After retiring from the military in 1993, he became the first black U.S. secretary of state in 2001.

Ray Stubblebine/Reuters/Corbis

Coalitions of blacks, Hispanics, and whites in the Democratic Party brought an impressive number of African Americans to office in many major cities. In 1970 Kenneth Gibson was elected mayor of Newark; in 1973 Thomas Bradley was elected in Los Angeles, Maynard Jackson was elected in Atlanta, and Coleman Young was elected in Detroit. In 1983 Harold Washington was sworn in as the first black mayor of Chicago, and black victories continued in major and minor cities and in statewide elections in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

Toni Morrison

American writer Toni Morrison won the 1993 Nobel Prize for literature, becoming the first black woman to receive the prize. Morrison writes about African American women, celebrating their strength and vitality and revealing their struggles. She won the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for Beloved (1987), which explored the effects of slavery on a former slave living in Ohio after the American Civil War.
Ulf Anderson/Liaison Agency

Meanwhile, the number of blacks in Congress also grew. By 1994 the membership of the Congressional Black Caucus stood at 40, including Carol Moseley-Braun of Illinois, the first black woman to be elected to the U.S. Senate. In 1989 General Colin Powell became the first African American chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and L. Douglas Wilder was elected governor of Virginia, the first elected black governor in American history. Powell later became the first black secretary of state in 2001 and was succeeded by another black, Condoleezza Rice. In 2004 African American Barack Obama of Illinois was elected to the U.S. Senate, and in 2006 Massachusetts elected its first black governor, Deval Patrick. The same year Minnesota voters sent the first black Muslim, Keith Ellison, to the U.S. House of Representatives.

One of the most hopeful signs of racial progress during the decade was civil rights leader Jesse Jackson's run for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1988. Jackson was the first black man to mount a serious campaign for a major party's presidential nomination. He won Virginia's Democratic primary and 6.6 million primary votes nationally. Jackson did not win the nomination, but he amassed 1,200 delegates at the Democratic convention and was recognized as a major power in the party.

In 1983 Vanessa Williams became the first African American to win the Miss America Contest, and *The Color Purple* (1982) by black author Alice Walker won the Pulitzer Prize for literature. In 1993 Toni Morrison became the first African American to win the Nobel Prize for literature. Such black performers and sports stars as Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, and Bill Cosby became national icons.

XXVIII RACE AND CLASS

Developments in the last decades of the 20th century seemed to justify the title of one of the era's most influential books, *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978), by William Julius Wilson. It argued that economic class was beginning to replace race as the determinant of individual opportunity for African Americans. Falling incomes for many blacks accompanied rising financial and professional opportunities for others. At the same time that inner city residents were facing growing insecurity on the streets and in their homes, blacks were becoming more visible and influential in city halls, state houses, and the halls of Congress.

Yet, public racial intolerance and shocking acts of racial violence offered disturbing signs that race was still very significant. A young black man was killed in 1986 in Howard Beach, a white residential section of New York City. He was attempting to escape a mob that challenged his right to be there. In a similar incident three years later, a black teenager was killed by a white gang in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn. Another divisive issue in the 1980s was white opposition to legislation making the birthday of Martin Luther King,

Jr., a national holiday. Then in 1991, video pictures of Los Angeles police beating Rodney King, a black motorist stopped for a traffic violation, were broadcast on national TV. For many, this was visual proof that police brutality continued against African Americans. The acquittal of the white officers involved by an all-white jury sparked national outrage and a race riot in Los Angeles.

XXIX DIFFERING RACIAL PERCEPTIONS

Louis Farrakhan
Louis Farrakhan became head of the Nation of Islam, a black religious organization, in 1978. Farrakhan's anti-Semitic remarks and his message of black separatism have been controversial. However, many people have also supported his calls for economic independence and moral responsibility in the black community.
Brad Markel/Globe Photos, Inc.

During the 1980s and 1990s a number of publications and public debates documented the divergent ways blacks and whites viewed race. They showed that blacks and whites saw the existence of racial bias and the consequences of racial discrimination quite differently: many whites believed that racial discrimination had declined, while many blacks believed that more needed to be done to combat racial discrimination.

The extent of conflicting racial views was revealed by the differing reactions to the murder trial of black sports commentator and former football star O.J. Simpson in 1995. Simpson was accused of murdering his estranged wife and her companion, and his lawyers presented a defense that charged the Los Angeles police with racial bias. The televised trial became a public spectacle dramatizing opposing perceptions of the legal system. The jury’s not guilty verdict outraged most whites who saw it as a miscarriage of justice and satisfied many African Americans who considered it a justifiable indictment of police racism. Television recorded these contrasting reactions to the verdict: a white crowd stunned, a black group elated.

The racial divide in America remained a critical issue in the late 1990s. In 1995 Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, perceived by many whites and some blacks to be a purveyor of anti-Semitism, organized the Million Man March in Washington, D.C. Although many condemned Farrakhan as a black racist, the Million Man March brought hundreds of thousands of black men to Washington to show black pride and solidarity. Participants pledged themselves to work for positive change in their communities. Two years later, a

call for a Million Woman March brought tens of thousands of black women to Philadelphia in a similar show of concern.

Race remained one of America's most contentious issues. In 1997 President Bill Clinton asked Americans to come together in frank discussions of race and led some of the conversations personally. Suggestions that the president apologize for slavery received little public support. Congress refused to support proposals for an African American Museum on the Mall, in Washington, D.C. Arson claimed hundreds of black churches in 1996 and 1997, but white churches and businesses provided aid for their reconstruction. Such conflicting signs provided evidence that race was still America's unresolved dilemma.

Some attempts to atone for America’s racist past were made as the 21st century began. In 2001 and 2002 two men were convicted on state charges for the bombing of a black church in Birmingham, Alabama, that killed four young girls attending Sunday school. Previously, no state charges had been filed in the case. In 2005 the United States Senate formally apologized to lynching victims and their descendants, most of whom were African American, acknowledging the Senate’s failure to pass federal anti-lynching legislation. The same year a jury in Philadelphia, Mississippi, convicted Edgar Ray Killen, a former Ku Klux Klan member, of manslaughter in the 1964 murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. Previously, the men responsible for the murders had only faced charges of violating federal civil rights laws. Killen’s trial represented the first time anyone involved in the abduction and murders of the three civil rights activists had faced state murder and manslaughter charges.

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