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History

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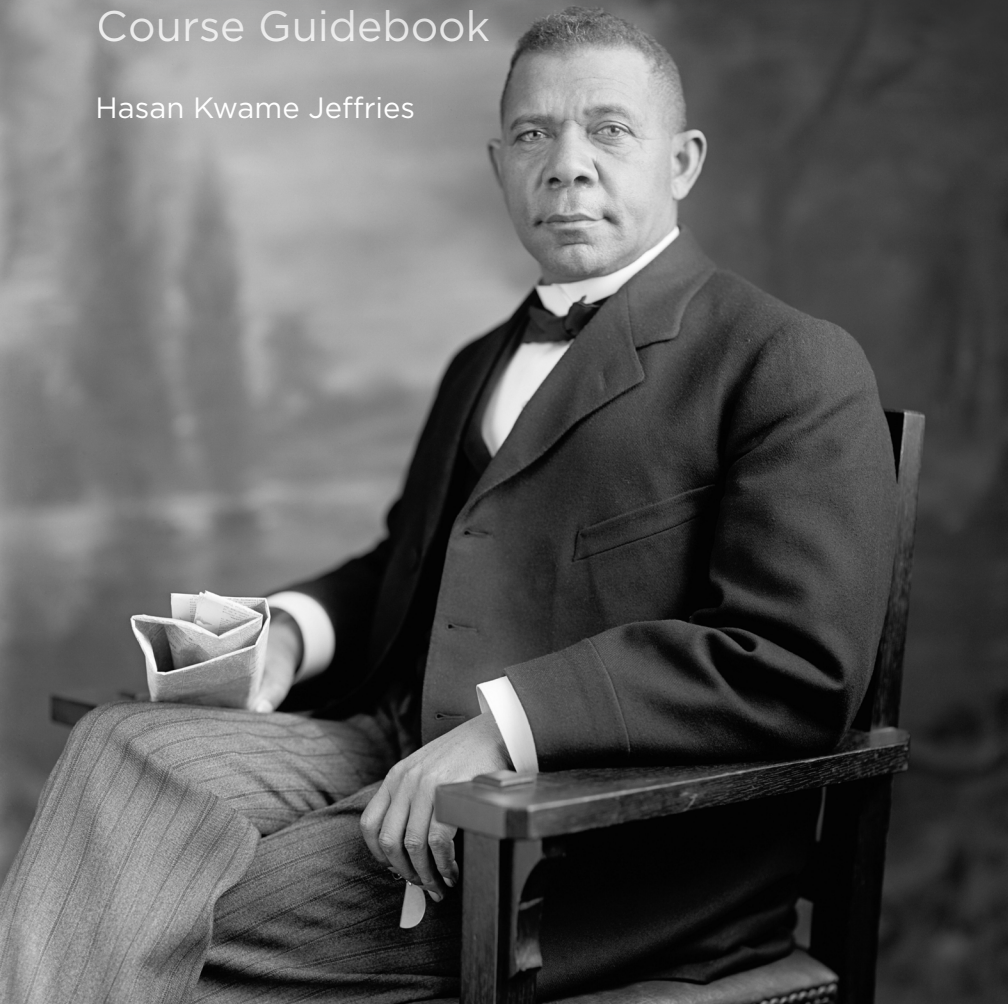
American History

African American History
From Emancipation through Jim Crow

Course Guidebook

Hasan Kwame Jeffries



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About **Hasan Kwame Jeffries**

Hasan Kwame Jeffries is an Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University who teaches, researches, and writes about the African American experience from a historical perspective. He earned a PhD in American History with a specialization in African American History from Duke University. He is the author and narrator of the Audible Original series *Great Figures of the Civil Rights Movement*, and he tells the remarkable story of the original Black Panther Party in *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*. He is the editor of *Understanding and Teaching the Civil Rights Movement* and the host of the podcast *Teaching Hard History*.

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African American History

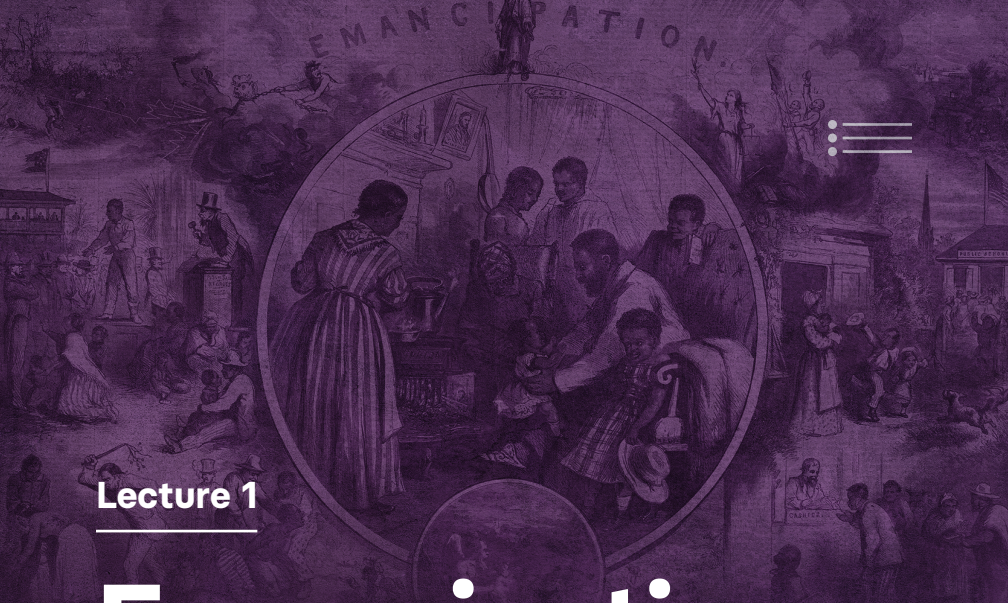
From Emancipation through Jim Crow

This course explores the African American experience from the end of slavery through the beginning of Jim Crow's demise, a period stretching from the 1860s to the 1950s.

The first four lectures cover the transition from slavery to freedom. Lectures 1 and 2 examine enslaved African Americans' fight to gain their freedom and emancipated African Americans' fight to secure basic civil and human rights, called their freedom rights. Lecture 3 investigates the tangible gains that Black people made during Reconstruction and answers how and why racial progress unraveled so quickly. And lecture 4 charts the rise of Jim Crow despite the determined efforts of African Americans to prevent racial segregation from spreading.

The middle lectures consider the African American experience during the height of Jim Crow. Lecture 5 confronts the harsh reality of racial terrorism, which shaped the contours of Black life. Lecture 6 follows Black soldiers overseas during World War I as they fought to make the world safe for democracy. Then, lecture 7 follows African American activists, such as James Weldon Johnson and Marcus Garvey, into Black communities and the corridors of political power. Lecture 8 explores the emergence of the New Negro, whose defiant spirit was immortalized in the powerful poetry and prose of the Harlem Renaissance.

The final lectures tackle the tragedy and triumph of Black life during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s. Lecture 9 begins with the Scottsboro Boys, nine Black youth who tried to endure the Great Depression by riding the rails, only to be ensnared in a criminal justice system that made criminals out of just about any Black person. Lecture 10 explains the impact of the New Deal and how African Americans made the most of opportunities created by the wave of new federal policies and programs. Lecture 11 looks at Black efforts to defeat Nazism abroad and racism at home during World War II. And lecture 12 analyzes the intersection of race and sports, introducing the heroes and heroines of athletics—men and women who shattered racial barriers on and off the playing field.



Lecture 1

Emancipation: The Fight for Rights Begins

On April 12, 1861, South Carolina militia bombarded a small garrison at Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor. The Civil War had begun. In the time leading up to it, cash crops produced by enslaved African Americans had enhanced the South's prosperity. Whether planting tobacco in Virginia, harvesting rice in South Carolina, picking cotton in Mississippi, or cutting sugarcane in Louisiana, uncompensated Black labor created tremendous white wealth.

The Conditions of Slavery

Enslaved African Americans worked extremely long hours their entire lives. They did so not because of loyalty or devotion to a kind or benevolent enslaver. The myth of the good master is just that: a myth. There was no such thing as a good master, only enslavers who were not quite as cruel as others.

Those held in bondage worked out of fear. They feared the consequences of failing to do so. Coercion was the cornerstone of slavery. Violence, in its many forms, from whippings to family separation, made slavery a viable, and valuable, economic system.

Although treated as less than human, enslaved African Americans never lost sight of their own humanity. They loved and they laughed. They played and they prayed. They married

and they raised families. In these ways they created community. And through community—by bringing together immediate and extended family, real and fictive kin—they built the support networks they needed to endure the horrors of slavery.

Mitchelville ● During the Civil War, the Union army established a forward base of operations on Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. Hilton Head became a beacon light for thousands of enslaved African Americans who made their way to the Union encampment in search of freedom. As the number of African Americans on Hilton Head grew, General Ormsby Mitchel set aside land in quarter-acre lots near the Drayton Plantation for families to settle. This new community came to be called Mitchelville in honor of General Mitchel, who died shortly after setting it in motion.

Resistance

Enslaved African Americans also resisted their bondage. They rejected outright the fantasy that slavery was either a positive good or a necessary evil. They saw it for what it was: a crime against humanity. This led a daring few to organize rebellions to secure their freedom, including Gabriel in Richmond, Virginia, in 1800; Denmark Vesey in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1822; and Nat Turner in Southampton County, Virginia, in 1831. But none of these uprisings succeeded. Whites were too numerous, too heavily armed, and too well organized to be defeated by small bands of freedom fighters.

Understanding that insurrection was doomed to fail, the vast majority of enslaved African Americans expressed their opposition to slavery in other ways. Some fled to nearby free states and territories, tapping into secret networks of Black and white abolitionists for assistance.

Others engaged in more covert acts of resistance, such as feigning illness or destroying property. Still others resisted slavery by clinging to African cultural traditions, from Akan naming practices to Bantu foodways. In acts seen and unseen, the enslaved always fought back.

War and Emancipation

During the American Civil War, in the North, free Blacks enthusiastically answered the call to serve, but the federal government turned them away. President Abraham Lincoln was unequivocal: This was a war to preserve the Union, not to end slavery. Arming African Americans would confuse the issue; Black soldiers were not welcome.

President Abraham Lincoln

In the South, enslaved African Americans fled their captors and made their way to nearby Union lines. At first, Northern officers returned the freedom seekers to slavery. But since they kept coming, and since their departure from the fields disrupted the Confederate war effort, the officers soon claimed them as confiscated property, a legal sleight of hand that allowed them to remain free.

However, as the conflict wore on, it became abundantly clear to

Lincoln that to preserve the Union, slavery had to end. On September 22, 1862, Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which took effect 100 days later, on January 1, 1863.

On the eve of the new year, Black churches held watchnight services for community members who anxiously awaited the appointed hour. When midnight finally arrived, church bells rang out in cities across the North.

But for the enslaved, this was not the long-awaited Day of Jubilee. The Confederacy ignored the president's decree, and the order didn't apply to those held in areas that remained under Union control. In truth, the Emancipation Proclamation freed no one.

Symbolically, though, it was important: The North was now fighting to end slavery. Strategically, it mattered too. European powers were unlikely to side with a slavocracy over a government fighting to end slavery. It was most significant, though, as a military measure because it allowed African Americans to enlist in the armed forces. And enlist they did. 185,000 Black men donned Union blue, determined to deliver a death blow to slavery.

These Black soldiers helped turn the tide of the war, fighting with bravery and determination, despite facing discriminatory treatment from their side, including unequal pay. If captured, Black soldiers would be enslaved or outright massacred. Several hundred Black men were slaughtered at Fort Pillow in Tennessee in April 1864 after their white commander surrendered—against their desperate pleas not to—to Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest.

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the "year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred "and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within "any State or designated part of a State, the people "whereof shall then be in rebellion against the "United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and "forever free; and the Executive Government of the

Beyond the battlefield, enslaved African Americans engaged in a general strike, refusing to work at the same pace and in the same way as they did before. Others continued to flee, bound for the contraband camps that sprang up in the shadow of Union encampments.

After Emancipation

The war came to an end in April 1865 at Appomattox Court House in Virginia, when Confederate general Robert E. Lee surrendered his Army of Northern Virginia to Union general Ulysses S. Grant. But word of the Confederacy's defeat took time to spread. Enslaved African Americans in Texas did not learn about it until June 19, when Union soldiers arrived in Galveston with the good news. Two and a half years after Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the Day of Jubilee had finally arrived. From that day forward, Black Texans would mark the occasion with picnics and parades as a part of their annual Juneteenth celebrations.

Emancipation marked a critical turning point in the Black experience. Prior to emancipation, the primary focus for African Americans

was abolition. Whether enslaved or free, Black people understood that no one could be free unless everyone was free. After emancipation, the focus shifted. Now the aim was securing freedom rights. Freedom rights were those rights that African Americans identified as the essence of freedom. Without them, emancipation would be meaningless.

Freedom rights combined two kinds of rights. The first were civil rights, or rights conferred by government and enumerated in law, such as the right to free speech, the right to vote, the right to keep and bear arms, and the right to due process under the law. The second set of rights was human rights, or rights inherent to all people regardless of their status in society, such as the right to form families, the right to personal safety, the right to adequate food and shelter, the right to learn to read and write, and the right to enjoy the fruit of one's labor.

Economics

African Americans sought advances in three areas of freedom rights. The first centered on economics. Above all else, they wanted to control their own labor. They no longer wanted to work in gangs, toiling alongside scores of others, as was common practice during slavery.

Instead, they wanted to work in family units and keep women and young children out of the fields. They also wanted to own land—and not just any land. They wanted to own the land they had worked while enslaved, land they had improved with their own blood and sweat, because they knew that landownership was the key to economic independence.

Some African Americans acquired land through the 1866 Southern Homestead Act, which made millions of federal acres available to the public for purchase. But most freed people, having never been compensated for their labor, had no money. They could neither afford to buy homestead land nor pay the startup costs associated with running a farm. And the small number of African Americans who could were sold land that was too swampy or too hilly to be productive.

Freed people struggled to acquire land because their vision of freedom differed significantly from that of Northern white lawmakers who believed that African Americans would only work productively under the supervision of Southern whites. Although Radical Republicans championed abolition, they too believed in white supremacy.

Except for a few legislators, like Thaddeus Stevens, a Radical Republican and congressman from Pennsylvania, rather than promote policies that supported Black landownership, they insisted that freed people sign annual wage labor contracts with their former enslavers. These former enslavers had neither the cash nor the desire to honor these agreements. As result, freed people remained penniless as well as landless.

Politics

The second set of freedom rights that emancipated African Americans pursued centered on politics. Freed people wanted access to the ballot box. Speaking before the American Anti-Slavery Society in May 1865, the Black abolitionist Frederick Douglass, who remembered the enslaver's lash, said, "Slavery is not abolished until the Black man has the ballot."

The former Confederates who controlled Southern legislatures in the months immediately after the war initially blocked freed people from participating in politics. But Radical Republicans, knowing that African Americans would support the party of Lincoln, extended the franchise to Black men through the Reconstruction Acts, which passed over President Andrew Johnson's veto in March 1867.

Radical Republicans added constitutional protections for Black voting rights with the Fifteenth Amendment, which was ratified three years later. With the ballot in hand, African Americans elected close to 2,000 Black men to state constitutional conventions, county courthouses, state legislatures, and Congress.

Black officeholders did what they could, but the odds were stacked against them. Former Confederates filled the ranks of the Democratic Party and attempted to block every move the Black legislators made. Republican allies weren't very helpful either. They too embraced white supremacy and found little use for laws that promoted racial equality beyond voting rights.

Time also limited the effectiveness of Black officeholders. In many states, Democrats retook political control at the state level in the early 1870s, neutralizing the influence of Black elected officials. Then, they ran African Americans completely out of office.

Social Freedoms

The final set of rights that African Americans pursued revolved around social freedoms. African Americans wanted their marital and parental bonds recognized by the state and protected by law to prevent family separations. Losing a loved one to sale was devastating because there was almost no chance of seeing that person again. As soon as possible, freed people registered their marriages at county courthouses.

African Americans wanted to worship as they pleased, so they left white churches, where they had been forced to pray to a God who encouraged blind obedience to their tormentors. They formed churches of their own, where they could pray to a just and merciful God.

They wanted to be able to protect themselves against racial terrorism, including sexual assault. Therefore, they acquired guns when they could and agreed to defend each other when necessary.

Access to education was another focus. One of the great sins of slavery was denying African Americans the right to the learn the fundamentals of literacy. They lobbied state legislatures to set up compulsory public education systems. They petitioned the Freedmen's Bureau—the underfunded federal agency established to help African Americans transition from slavery to freedom—to open schools.

They also appealed to Northern missionary societies to send teachers. And they chipped in where they could, with what they could, taxing their meager resources to provide classroom space and supplement teacher salaries. But there

were too few schools, too few teachers, and too many students to provide freed people what they needed and what they truly deserved.

Conclusion

Although the first years of freedom fell well short of Black expectations, disappointment did not lessen freed people's determination to obtain their freedom rights. In the years ahead, African Americans continued to fight for the civil and human rights that white Americans had denied them during slavery. In fact, obtaining these rights became the basis of the economic, political, and social agenda that they pursued for the next century.

Lecture 2

The Promise and Betrayal of Reconstruction

Tensions ran high in Grant Parish, Louisiana, ahead of the 1872 gubernatorial election. Former Confederates, who filled the ranks of the Democratic Party, looked to oust the Black and white Republican coalition that controlled the state government. Some 4,600 ballots were cast on Election Day: 2,400 for the incumbent Republican candidate and 2,200 for the Democratic challenger. The returns mirrored results for the rest of the state, a close but clear victory for Republicans.

Violence in Grant Parish

Defeat did not sit well with Democrats. They questioned the legitimacy of the election because they did not believe that African Americans had a right to vote. In Colfax, the seat of Grant Parish, white men plotted to overthrow the local government. Inspired by the Ku Klux Klan, they formed their own racial terror group, the White League, and announced plans to march on the parish courthouse and seize control.

To prevent a coup from occurring, a Black militia composed of former Union soldiers marched on the courthouse in advance of the White League. When the armed Black men arrived, they took up defensive positions and waited.

On April 13, 1873—Easter Sunday—about 150 White League members and sympathizers showed up with Confederate-issued weapons, including a cannon. They soon opened fire. The Black militia held off the siege as long as they could, but the white mob had them outgunned, making surrender the only way out. But when they surrendered, the white attackers massacred them, shooting some and hanging others.

The Colfax Massacre was headline news across the country. Like many Northerners, Republican president Ulysses S. Grant was outraged by the blatant disregard for the rule of law and infuriated by the contempt shown for African American civil rights. He immediately sent troops to Grant Parish to restore order and hold those responsible for the massacre accountable. But only nine members of the mob were charged and went to trial for violating the

Enforcement Acts, the federal laws passed in 1870 and 1871 designed to curb racial terrorism by forbidding conspiracies to deny the constitutional rights of citizens.

In 1876, the Supreme Court overturned the defendants' convictions. In *United States v. Cruikshank*, the court ruled that individuals could not be guilty of violating Fourteenth Amendment rights to due process and equal protection under the law because the amendment applied only to states, not to individuals. By narrowly interpreting the Fourteenth Amendment, the ruling limited the ability of the federal government to protect the civil rights of African Americans.

Reconstruction's Interpretations

White Southerners and white Northerners imagined Reconstruction after the Civil War completely differently. They also saw it in ways that conflicted with African Americans' vision of freedom.

African Americans believed that Reconstruction should advance their freedom rights agenda. They insisted that federal and state policies promote Black economic independence, support civil rights, and lead to Black political power.

White Northerners thought otherwise. After the devastation wrought by the war, their primary concern was jump-starting the Southern economy and strengthening the Republican Party, even if that meant setting aside the freedom rights agenda of African Americans.

White Southerners carried with them into the postwar era an enslaver's mentality, a set of beliefs derived from generations of holding African Americans in bondage. The central tenet of the enslaver's mentality was the idea that whites were entitled to the fruit of Black labor.

White Northerners, led by congressional Republicans, understood that the key to the Southern economy was Black agricultural labor, the workforce the South had relied on for generations to plant and harvest cash crops such as cotton and tobacco. But white Northerners did not believe that African Americans could work effectively on their own—a view that was absurd, of course.

An Untenable System

The default system for managing Black labor had long been slavery. After the Thirteenth Amendment abolished that, one possibility was setting up freed people on farms of their own, which could have been done immediately by redistributing the millions of acres of plantation land that had been abandoned or confiscated during the war.

But white Northerners showed very little interest in land redistribution as a way to restart the Southern economy. They also had very little appetite for punishing those who took up arms against the federal government. In addition, they had no interest in providing reparations to African Americans.

Indeed, when Pennsylvania congressman Thaddeus Stevens proposed legislation that would punish Confederate leaders for the "unjust and wicked war they instigated" and provide the people they enslaved with reparations in the form of land, his bill went nowhere. And when President Andrew

Johnson took back the 40-acre plots in South Carolina and Georgia that thousands of Black families had obtained under General William T. Sherman's Special Field Order No. 15, the outrage expressed by African Americans fell on deaf ears up North.

Instead of priming the pump of the Southern economy by placing land directly in the hands of freed people, federal officials restored the property rights of ex-Confederates. They also insisted that freed people remain on the plantations of their enslavement and sign annual labor contracts with their former enslavers.

This was a terrible idea. Plantation owners withheld significant portions of freed people's monthly wages until the end of the year, forcing them to remain in their employ until after the harvest or lose the wages they were owed. They demanded that freed people buy food and supplies through them and regularly charged them for goods they never purchased. And they docked freed people for hours that had been spent hard at work.

Sharecropping

Everyone, including federal officials, recognized the situation for what it was: untenable. And since there was no going back to slavery, the way forward required a new economic arrangement, but one that was still dependent on Black labor. Out of this uncertainty emerged sharecropping.

In theory, sharecropping was equitable. The landowner provided the worker with housing, seed, and tools that the worker needed to get a crop in the ground in the spring and harvested in the fall. In exchange, the worker provided the

labor needed to cultivate the crop. At the end of the year, each party received half of the earnings from the sale of the crop.

But the practice of sharecropping differed substantially from the theory. Freed people had to purchase on credit everything they needed. And their only source of credit was the landowner or a designated furnishing merchant. Other plantation owners would not lend to them, and neither would white-controlled banks, a practice designed to keep Black workers obligated to the person on whose land they worked.

To secure the advance, the landowner placed a lien on the worker's share of that year's crop and claimed extraordinary rights as a result, including dictating what crop had to be planted. This was almost always cotton, regardless of its market price or the needs of the worker's family. Landowners also took what they were owed first.

But the worker's share of the crop almost never covered the cost of the advance because landowners always calculated what was owed and what was earned in their favor. The balance that remained carried over to the next year, trapping African Americans in a cycle of perpetual debt. By the late 1870s, the Southern economy was up and running again, but not as anyone had envisioned.

Civil Rights

Civil rights for African Americans was another area in which freed people, white Northerners, and white Southerners saw things differently. Securing civil rights was a central component of African Americans' freedom rights agenda, and they insisted that the federal government do what was necessary to ensure that they could enjoy them.

White Northerners believed that freed people were entitled to some civil rights, but not all. And they were committed to preserving those civil rights that they felt African Americans deserved, at least for a little while.

White Southerners were unequivocal in their opposition. They enacted legislation immediately after the war designed to curb African Americans' civil rights. These new statutes, known as Black Codes, enshrined racial discrimination in law.

African Americans immediately objected to the discriminatory measures, and congressional Republicans reacted swiftly, moving to nullify the Black Codes by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and overriding President Johnson's veto of the bill. The act would serve as the blueprint for the Fourteenth Amendment.

The first section of the Fourteenth Amendment contained three primary provisions. The first granted citizenship to all persons "born or naturalized in the United States," including those who had been enslaved. The second prohibited states from abridging "the privileges or immunities of citizens," or depriving "any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of the law." And the third provision prohibited states from denying "to any person … the equal protection of the laws." Congress passed the amendment in June 1866, and the states ratified it two years later.

The Fourteenth Amendment was a boon to those who championed basic civil rights for African Americans. But it did not mean that white Northerners were willing to embrace African Americans as equals. Many Northern states had their own Black Codes, nearly identical in form and function to the racially discriminatory laws that surfaced in the South immediately after the war.

The enthusiasm that white Northerners showed for the broad civil rights protections offered by the Fourteenth Amendment did not extend to laws designed to prevent specific forms of social discrimination, such as segregation in public accommodations. White Republicans in Southern legislatures offered little support to their Black counterparts when they introduced measures to keep railroads and restaurants open to everyone regardless of race.

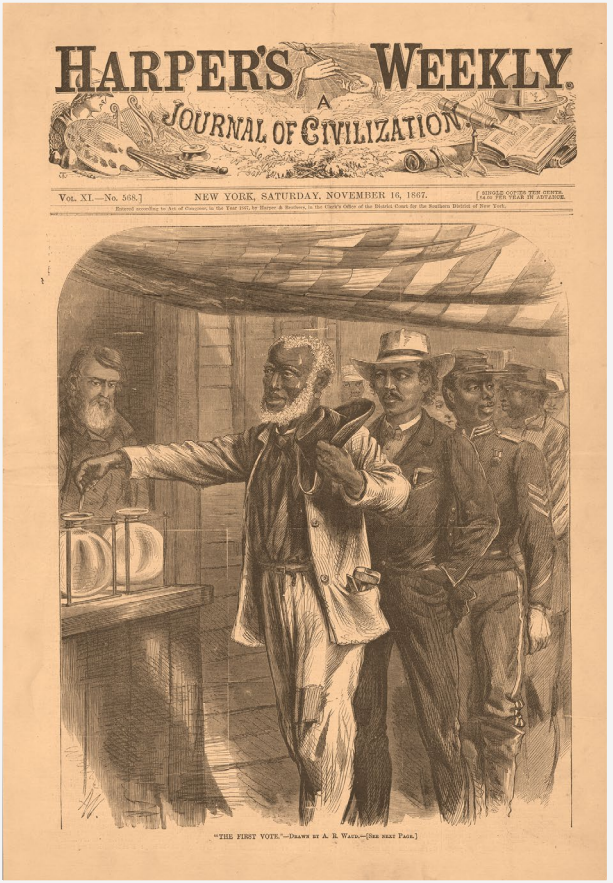
Congressional Republicans, led by seven Black members of the House, did pass one more piece of antidiscrimination legislation, the Civil Rights Act of 1875. This explicitly prohibited discrimination in public places, with the notable exceptions of schools and churches.

But the victory didn't last long. In 1883, the United States Supreme Court declared that the provisions in the 1875 law violated the Constitution. The court reasoned that individuals had to appeal to state governments to stop discrimination.

For African Americans, seeking redress for discriminatory treatment from Southern governments was a nonstarter; they simply would not render assistance. As a result, African Americans would wait three-quarters of a century for the next wave of federal civil rights measures to be passed before they could use the law to draw the federal government into the struggle to end discrimination in public accommodations.

Voting rights was the one area where African Americans and Northern whites found clear common cause. Freed people wanted the ballot, knowing that it was essential to their becoming full and equal members of society. And white Northerners wanted them to have it, knowing that it was essential to strengthening the party of Lincoln.

The Fifteenth Amendment, the third of the Reconstruction amendments, went a long way toward meeting both objectives. Ratified on February 3, 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment declared that:



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VOL. XI.—No. 568.] NEW YORK, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 1867. [SINGLE COPY TEN CENTS. $4.00 PER YEAR IN ADVANCE.

"THE FIRST VOTE."—DRAWN BY A. R. WAUD.—[SEE NEXT PAGE.]

> "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

This cleared the way for Black men to vote—and vote they did. Black men cast ballots en masse for themselves and on behalf of Black women, who wouldn't receive voting rights protections until the Nineteenth Amendment was added to the constitution in 1920. Even then, very few Black women were able to vote until the 1965 Voting Rights Act became law.

Terroristic Violence

White Republicans welcomed Black votes but not Black voices. When it came to policymaking, they showed little interest in executing African Americans' freedom rights agenda. Their failure to embrace Black politics weakened Black political power, depressed Black enthusiasm for the Republican Party, and created an opening for white Southerners to reassert control over the region.

Some white Southerners resorted to murder and mayhem to remove African Americans and their white Republican allies from office. The Ku Klux Klan took the lead in terrorizing the Black community. Confederate veterans in Pulaski, Tennessee, formed the first iteration of the racial terror group at the end of 1865. Just over a year later, they named former Confederate general Nathan Bedford Forrest Grand Wizard.

Along with copycat organizations like the Knights of the White Camelia, the Klan was most active in majority-white communities that had large Black populations. In addition to Black elected officials, the Klan targeted teachers, preachers, landowners, newspaper publishers, and the handful of white people who worked with freed people. In short, they went after anyone whose actions encouraged

or supported Black self-determination.

By 1870, Klan violence had resulted in the deaths of thousands of African Americans. At least 2,000 Black people died by lynching alone between 1865 and 1877. But most Republican governors, afraid of further alienating white Southerners, refused to meet force with force by declaring martial law. They called for calm when they should have called for the state militia.

In Tennessee, Arkansas, and Texas, where troops were sent in and arrests were made, Klan violence abated. In states where troops were nowhere to be seen, the violence intensified, leaving African Americans to fend for themselves.

Congress stepped in with the Enforcement Act of 1870 and the Klan Act the next year, making interfering with a person's political rights, including their right to vote and hold office, a federal crime. President Grant followed by sending troops to Mississippi to squash a surge in violence and later to Louisiana to stop the coup d'état in Colfax.

But Northern enthusiasm for maintaining a fighting force in the South solely to protect African Americans was waning. Whites had become more concerned with the economic depression that hit in 1873 and less confident in the federal government because of a series of high-profile corruption scandals.

It also didn't help that the Supreme Court was undermining the ability of the federal government to protect the civil rights of African Americans by interpreting the Fourteenth Amendment as applying only to states and declaring new civil rights legislation unconstitutional. By the time voters cast ballots in the 1876 presidential election, Democrats had retaken control of the legislatures in every Southern state except South Carolina, Louisiana, and Florida.

Through violence, ballot fraud, and political maneuvering, Democrats had effectively ended Reconstruction at the state level. But they were still distressed by the three holdout states and the lingering presence of federal troops in the region.

When controversy erupted over the outcome of the 1876 presidential election, white Southerners seized the moment. Although Samuel Tilden, the Democratic candidate, won the popular vote, Democrats conceded the White House to Rutherford B. Hayes, the Republican candidate from Ohio.

In exchange, the army withdrew the last of its troops from the South, and Republicans handed control of Louisiana, South Carolina, and Florida to Democrats. Reconstruction ended unceremoniously with the Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1877, closing an era of reform that fell well short of its potential.

Lecture 3

Separate and Unequal: The Rise of Jim Crow

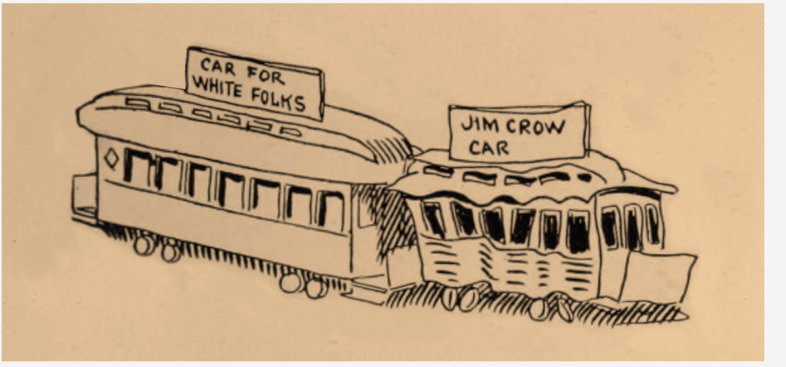
In New Orleans, after emancipation (and in some cases before), various people of African descent attended racially integrated schools, sat where they wanted on trains and streetcars, and married whomever they pleased. But that was changing, and it was changing quickly.

Harmful Legislation

The Hayes-Tilden compromise of 1877, which completed the Democrats' return to power, was one factor facilitating segregation. Another was the Supreme Court's opposition to Congress's efforts to protect the civil rights of African Americans. These emboldened Southern white lawmakers to pass sweeping segregation ordinances as a way to reassert white supremacy.

The new laws required separate accommodations for African Americans and whites. They segregated everything from hospitals to cemeteries, touching Black life from the cradle to the grave. Almost overnight, the system of mutually reinforcing segregation laws and social customs known as Jim Crow took shape.

The Louisiana state legislature passed the Separate Car Act in 1890, requiring "separate railway carriages for the white and colored races." Although the statute stipulated



that the separate train cars had to be identical, the reality of segregation was that African Americans always received less than whites.

Plessy v. Ferguson

In New Orleans, a group of Black civil rights activists formed the Citizens Committee for the express purpose of organizing a test case to challenge the constitutionality of the state's Separate Car Act. The plaintiff was Homer Plessy.

On June 7, 1892, Plessy entered the Press Street Depot in New Orleans and purchased a first-class ticket for the East Louisiana Railway No. 8 train bound for Covington, Louisiana. But Plessy never intended to leave the city; he intended to get arrested.

After boarding the train, Plessy sat in a whites-only car. In appearance, Plessy looked white, but his paternal grandmother was a free woman of color. Plessy's other grandparents were of mixed racial ancestry. As a result, when he sat in the whites-only car, he violated the state's segregation ordinance and was subject to arrest and fine.

The conductor of the train knew that Plessy was African American. He also knew what Plessy was planning, having been alerted in advance by the railroad company. Like several other railroads, the East Louisiana opposed the Separate Car Act.

When the conductor of the train bound for Covington approached Plessy, the shoemaker knew he would be asked if he was "colored." At the same time, the conductor knew that Plessy would answer yes and refuse to move to the so-

called colored car. A private detective hired by the railroad knew what both would say. He was there to arrest Plessy and whisk him off to the parish jail of New Orleans. Everyone performed their part.

Lawyers for the Citizens Committee bailed Plessy out and stood with him as Orleans Parish criminal court judge John Howard Ferguson found him guilty of violating the Separate Car Act. Plessy's conviction allowed the Citizens Committee to challenge the constitutionality of the state's segregation laws.

The group's lawyers immediately appealed the conviction to the Louisiana State Supreme Court, questioning the constitutionality of the statute on the grounds that it violated the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of equal protection under the law. But the court rejected their argument.

Undeterred, the lawyers took Plessy's case to the US Supreme Court, where they argued that the only effect of Louisiana's Separate Car Act was to "perpetuate the stigma of color." On May 18, 1896, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. By a vote of 7–1, the court ruled against Homer Plessy and affirmed the constitutionality of state-imposed racial segregation.

Justice John Marshall Harlan delivered his most famous minority opinion in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. In his dissent, Harlan wrote,

> "The white race deems itself to be the dominant race in this country. ... But in view of the constitution, in the eye of the law, there is in this country no superior, dominant, ruling class of citizens. There is no caste here. Our constitution ... neither knows nor tolerates classes among citizens."

Back in New Orleans, the Citizens Committee shared Justice Harlan's dismay and disappointment. The group's attorneys had offered sound legal and strong moral arguments, but none proved persuasive enough for the majority of justices, for whom racial discrimination was not only acceptable but expected.

With his appeals exhausted, Homer Plessy paid the $25 fine levied against him by Judge Ferguson for violating the state's Separate Car Act. He lived a quiet life after that. When he died in 1925, just two weeks shy of his 62nd birthday, his case continued to serve as the legal precedent guiding all race-related jurisprudence.

Fallout

Plessy v. Ferguson was a critical development in African American history. The court's separate-but-equal doctrine provided Southern states with constitutional cover as they passed a profusion of segregation ordinances during the first

few decades of the new century. It also provided Northern states with a rationalization for continuing discriminatory policies in housing, education, employment, and policing.

Plessy marked the beginning of the Jim Crow era, a period bounded by the 1896 ruling and the 1965 Voting Rights Act. During these years, legal segregation and disenfranchisement defined the parameters of Black citizenship and circumscribed African Americans' unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

But *Plessy* was more than a starting point for a new historical moment. It was also an endpoint, the culmination of a concerted effort on the part of white Southerners to exercise total authority over African Americans, an ability they had lost when slavery was abolished.

Controlling Black Labor

Jim Crow, like slavery, was about power—the power to control Black workers. The persistence of an enslaver's mentality led white Southerners to develop a variety of mechanisms for controlling Black workers. Sharecropping quickly emerged as one of the most effective tools in their arsenal.

Beyond that, many Black men, women, and children were arrested on bogus charges, such as abusive language, reckless eyeballing, trespassing, and vagrancy, and convicted by corrupt justices-of-the-peace who were working in concert with local police. The fine for the alleged crime might be small, perhaps $1.50, but court costs and fees were exorbitant, often totaling more than $50, which was well beyond many people's means.

To recover what they charged, county and state officials leased those they had just convicted to employers in the market for inexpensive, disposable Black labor. Those who came calling on county courthouses included plantation owners as well as agents for railroad companies and the extractive industries. While the cost of leasing a prisoner was cheap, convict leasing was big business. Starting in the 1880s, it created a financial windfall for local and state governments.

Once leased, African Americans had to work off the cost of their purchase, a term that could last many months or even years. But living conditions in convict labor camps were dreadful, and working conditions were even worse. Survival was a matter of chance. A quarter of the nearly 750 county prisoners who wound up in Birmingham mines between 1894 and 1896 died. That's a higher mortality rate than the Middle Passage. By all accounts, convict leasing was just a different kind of slavery.

While segregation was a mechanism that white Southerners used to control Black workers, they didn't invent it; they adopted it from the North. For instance, New York City segregated streetcars in the 1850s, and Boston segregated public schools even earlier than that. And Ohio passed laws in 1807 to regulate the behavior of free Blacks.

White Southerners, however, took racial segregation to the extreme. Not only did they separate Blacks and whites on streetcars and at schools but also at hospitals, job sites, parks, stores, jails, restrooms, churches, and even cemeteries. If there was a way to separate people by race, white Southerners figured out how to do it.

Segregation helped control Black labor by regulating Black behavior. By stigmatizing Blackness, it justified discriminatory treatment. If African Americans didn't deserve to ride in the same railroad car, eat at the same lunch counter, or attend the same school, then the thinking went that they didn't deserve equal pay or a fair share of what a crop sold for at market.

Blocking Voters

White Southerners protected the new social system of segregation and the new debt-based labor arrangements by disenfranchising African Americans. Starting with Mississippi in 1890, every state in the former Confederacy over the next 20 years rewrote its state constitution to include provisions that stripped African Americans of the vote. To get around the Fifteenth Amendment, which forbade denying people the right to vote because of their race, white lawmakers used race-neutral language to hide their intent.

For instance, Alabama rewrote its state constitution in 1901, adding several measures designed to nullify Black voting rights that never mentioned race. The new stipulations included a cumulative poll tax, which mandated payment of back taxes before a person could register, a requirement that impoverished African Americans simply could not meet. They also included a literacy test, which disqualified the high percentage of African Americans who were unable to read or write because they were denied access to schools.

The impact of disenfranchisement was felt immediately. One year before Alabama's new constitution, Lowndes County, Alabama, had more than 5,000 Black registered voters. Five years later, the county had only 57.

Violent Enforcement

White Southerners enforced the spate of new discriminatory laws and customs through fear and violence. Sheriffs and their deputies used heavy-handed tactics, ranging from quick arrests to savage beatings, to make sure African Americans adhered to the dictates of the color line. Ordinary whites also rebuked African Americans, verbally and physically, for even the slightest breaches of segregation law and custom.

Lynching, however, was the ultimate enforcement mechanism. Whites lynched more than 1,000 African Americans during the last decade of the 19th century. These murders were not secret affairs conducted in darkness by masked men. They were public spectacles. Newspapers frequently advertised the events days in advance so that white people could gather.

And when the brutal business was done, a select few walked away with a piece of human remains as a keepsake. For those unable to snatch a dismembered body part, photographers created postcards of these ghastly gatherings for people to purchase as souvenirs.

The Wilmington Massacre

Despite the resurgence of white supremacy, African Americans in the bustling seaport city of Wilmington, North Carolina, held onto the gains they had made after emancipation and built a thriving Black community. They fellowshipped together in churches, bonded with one another in fraternal organizations, and cared for each other through benevolent societies. They participated in politics, voting into office Black and white Republicans.

But much of what they gained was wiped out on November 10, 1898, by a mob hell-bent on reestablishing white supremacist rule. For months, Wilmington's white elite, led by members of the Democratic Party, had been conspiring to get rid of the city's Republican officeholders. They feigned outrage and incredulity about an editorial in the *Daily Record*, a local Black newspaper published by Alexander Manly.

Manly had called out white men for attempting to justify lynching by saying they were only trying to stop sexual assaults on white women by Black men, when white people knew that the main perpetrators of sexual violence were white men, and the primary victims were Black women. Two days after Wilmington voters elected a predominantly Republican municipal government, an armed white mob, easily numbering more than 1,000, marched on Manly's office, fully intending to lynch him.

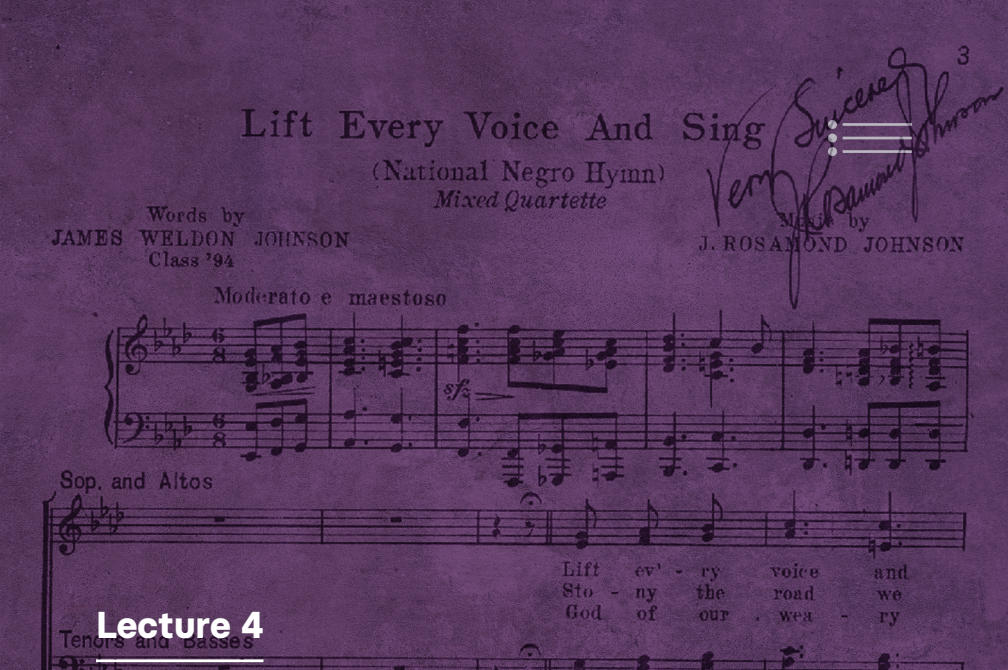
The men at the head of the mob were not rogue actors but leading lights in the community, such as former Democratic congressman Alfred Moore Waddell. Manly fled the city well before the rioters arrived, but that didn't stop the

mob from destroying his printing equipment and setting his office on fire. It also didn't stop them from rampaging through the Black community, killing as many as 60 African Americans.

The mob ordered the legitimately elected Republican members of the municipal government to vacate their offices and abandon the city under penalty of death. Fearing for their lives, some 20 Black elected officials and civic leaders joined Manly in exile. In their absence, white supremacists took their seats, with Waddell seizing the mayor's office. The coup orchestrated by Democrats had succeeded—white supremacists installed a new government, and state authorities recognized it immediately.

The impact of the armed overthrow of the Wilmington municipal government would be felt for generations, harming Black economic activity, political participation, and education. Some 2,100 African Americans were forced to leave the city to save their own lives. Many never returned, weakening the social networks and institutions at the heart of the Black community.

The Wilmington Massacre was not an anomaly. White mobs burned Black communities, murdered African Americans, and dispossessed Black people of their property in Pierce City, Missouri, in 1901; Springfield, Illinois, in 1908; East St. Louis, Illinois, in 1917; Elaine, Arkansas, in 1919; Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1921; Rosewood, Florida, in 1923; and Detroit, Michigan, in 1943. Rather than an aberration, the Wilmington Massacre was illustrative of the moment.



Lecture 4

Lift Every Voice and Sing

James Weldon Johnson was born in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1871. Florida was a slave, Confederate, and Jim Crow state, and Johnson's family was a part of the Black middle class. His mother, Helen Louise Dillet, was a schoolteacher, and his father, James, was the headwaiter at a whites-only resort hotel. Although his parents were not of great means, their earnings meant that Johnson did not have to work as a child. He was able to focus on his education, which he did with great enthusiasm. Importantly, he shared his mother's love of music.

James Weldon Johnson

Atlanta

Johnson eventually attended Atlanta University, where he honed his skills as a poet, novelist, and songwriter. This was also a crucial moment for Johnson because he spent these years coming to understand the color line beyond his narrow personal experiences.

As a child, Johnson's parents shielded him from the worst aspects of what would come to be called Jim Crow. As a student at Atlanta University, Johnson discussed and debated race and racism in American society with his teachers and classmates. He also learned a great deal about the color line from teaching in rural Georgia during the summer.

He saw white supremacy as a powerful force impacting the lives of every African American, even children whose parents were able to keep its most insidious aspects at bay. He also saw the pressing need to fight white supremacy in the classroom as well as in the courtroom.

Returning to Jacksonville

Johnson graduated from Atlanta University in 1894. With his bachelor's degree in hand, he returned to Jacksonville. Determined to make a difference through classroom instruction, he accepted a job as principal of Stanton and successfully led a desperately needed high school expansion.

Johnson also studied law at night, and in 1898 was admitted to the Florida Bar, the first African American to be so recognized since Reconstruction. Additionally, he published a newspaper, the *Daily American*, which focused on Black affairs. Along with all of that, he found time to pursue his twin artistic passions: poetry and songwriting.

Johnson's ability as a poet and songwriter, along with his brother J. Rosamond Johnson's gift as a composer, were well known and deeply appreciated by the Black community in Jacksonville. This led local leaders to ask Johnson to write

a song for a public commemoration of Abraham Lincoln's 91st birthday, which was February 12, 1900, an event that doubled as a celebration of emancipation.

Johnson agreed. He drafted lyrics for the new piece, which his brother set to music. Johnson then taught the song to a choir of 500 local Black schoolchildren, who performed it during the event.

The Success of "Lift Every Voice and Sing"

A few months after the celebration, Johnson and his brother left Florida for New York City, where they embarked on a successful career composing songs for musicals on and off Broadway. After leaving Florida, Johnson and his brother never gave much thought to the piece they had created for Lincoln's birthday. But the people of Jacksonville never stopped thinking about it. And they never stopped singing it.

Children sang it at school assemblies. Church congregations sang it during Sunday services. And soon, it spread beyond Jacksonville. College students from North Florida introduced it to glee clubs at the schools they attended, like the Jubilee Singers at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, who carried it the world over during their concert fundraising tours.

Jubilee Singers

Within a few years' time, Johnson's song, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," was being sung in African American communities across the country. It had become the national anthem of Black America.

The Content of "Lift Every Voice and Sing"

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" resonated with African Americans at the dawn of the 20th century for several reasons. First, it offered a powerful message of hope. In a post–*Plessy v. Ferguson* world, when life for African Americans was becoming more unequal, not less, the song buoyed spirits by reminding Black people of the hardships they had already overcome. If they could triumph over enslavement, they could triumph over Jim Crow.

Second, the song was grounded in Christian faith, and Christianity was African Americans' lodestar. It guided their way over troubled water, leading them from slavery to freedom.

Third, the song did not gloss over Black America's painful past; it confronted it head-on. The song made plain, through stirring verse, exactly what African Americans had been fighting against, and what they had been fighting for.

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" begins with a call for collective action in the name of securing freedom rights:

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty

Collective action was desperately needed at the start of the 20th century because the noose of Jim Crow was tightening around the necks of African Americans. For instance, in 1902, Louisiana became the first state to pass a statewide law segregating streetcars. Virginia followed suit in 1904 with a nonmandatory law. When given the option, the Virginia Passenger and Power Company of Richmond decided to segregate its cars, despite having provided integrated service for 40 years.

Two days after the company announced its decision, Richmond's Black residents crammed into a local church and debated how to respond. They concluded that the

best way to register their discontent and to get Virginia Passenger and Power to reverse course would be to boycott the company's streetcar service.

The boycott began, and African Americans sustained it for several months. Virginia Passenger and Power refused to budge, and their stubbornness forced them into bankruptcy. But for African Americans, it was a pyrrhic victory. In 1906, the Virginia Assembly passed a mandatory segregation law. Jim Crow wasn't going anywhere.

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" urged African Americans not to suffer silently. It encouraged them to speak up and speak out. Presaging the unapologetic voices of activists who would sing their own songs of freedom in the 1960s, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" encouraged African Americans to put white supremacists on public notice.

Let our rejoicing rise
High as the list'ning skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.

The Role of Black Journalists and Writers

Black journalists were leading advocates of collective action, and Black newspapers the primary outlets through which Black voices were heard. During the Richmond streetcar boycott, John Mitchell Jr., the intrepid editor of

John Mitchell Jr.

the *Richmond Planet*, led the charge to organize the protest, and through his pointed editorials, rallied support for the cause. His voice resounded, and Black people responded.

The editor also crusaded against lynching, which at the time claimed the lives of two to three African Americans a week. Mitchell demanded an end to the heinous crime and insisted that the perpetrators of these vile acts be brought to justice. He also vowed to lift up the victims of mob violence. He urged his readers to say their names so they would be remembered.

This sentiment was echoed in "Lift Every Voice and Sing," where tragedy was turned into triumph, becoming a light to illuminate the way forward:

Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,

Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us.

Facing the rising sun of our new day begun,

Let us march on till victory is won.

Black journalist Ida B. Wells was another among those who refused to be quiet about the atrocities of the times. Wells was born into slavery in Holly Springs, Mississippi, in the middle of the Civil War. As a young woman, Wells moved to Memphis, Tennessee, where she earned a living as an educator before turning her attention to publishing. She filled the pages of the *Memphis Free Speech*, which she co-owned, with news and notes that she thought would advance racial equality.

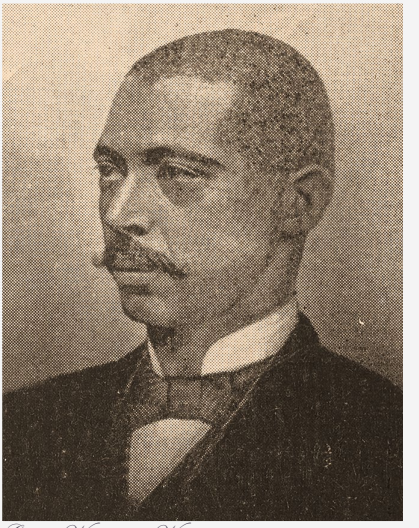
Ida B. Wells

But after her friend Thomas Henry Moss Sr., the co-owner of the People's Grocery store in Memphis, was lynched—the final act of a terror campaign designed to shut down the store—she focused on exposing mob violence. This drew the ire of local whites, who raided her office and destroyed her printing press.

But if the mob thought their rage would silence Wells, they were wrong. She embarked on a mission to tell the truth about lynching, from causes to consequences. She wrote and published *Southern Horrors* in 1892 and *The Red Record* three years later. She encouraged African Americans to

defend themselves rather than submit to white lawlessness. She famously said, "A Winchester rifle should have a place of honor in every Black home, and it should be used for that protection which the law refuses to give."

For her exposés and outspoken advocacy of equal rights and justice, she was forced to relocate to Chicago. But it really didn't matter where she was. She continued to speak the truth about the past and the present.



George Washington Williams

George Washington Williams was another who stood tall despite being bludgeoned by racial discrimination. Williams was committed to making sure that the world saw the white gleam of African Americans' bright star. He wrote two books, *History of the Negro Race in America 1619 to 1880* and *A History of Negro Troops in the War of Rebellion*.

He was equally committed to making sure the world saw the atrocities that African people were still suffering at the hands of Europeans. After visiting the Congo, which was under the brutal control of King Léopold II of Belgium, he penned an open letter to the king documenting the human rights violations occurring in the Congo and calling on the community of nations to intervene.

The Role of Faith

The third and final verse of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" is about faith, including the lines:

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way

African Americans possessed a deep and abiding belief in Christianity. But during slavery, they had to mute expressions of their faith. They had to worship in secret, often well after nightfall. To pray as they pleased, white people couldn't be around.

The Day of Jubilee heralded a new beginning. African Americans seized the moment and formed churches of their own to praise God as they saw fit. These weren't the first Black churches, though. In 1787, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, free Black men in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, were told to pray in a segregated section of the white Methodist church to which they belonged. Offended, they led a walkout of the African American membership and formed the Free African Society. This evolved into the African Methodist Episcopal Church, officially established in Philadelphia in 1816. Free Blacks in Southern cities also started their own churches.

Just like the churches that free African Americans established during slavery, post-emancipation Black churches were more than religious institutions. They

were hubs of Black life. African Americans gathered on Sundays for regular church service and throughout the week for religious ceremonies, social events, and political meetings. As autonomous Black spaces, they allowed African Americans to worship, socialize, and discuss racial matters free of white interference. Black churches also formalized social networks.

Pap Singleton's Movement ●
Born in 1809, Benjamin "Pap" Singleton was an independent-minded Black man from Tennessee. At the age of 37, he escaped to freedom but returned after the Civil War. Eventually, finding life in the South untenable, he left for Kansas in 1877. He was followed by some 300 African Americans over the next two years. Their success, measured in part by their ability to acquire land and live free of racial terror, prompted nearly 20,000 African Americans to move to Kansas in 1879 and 1880.

The God that African Americans worshipped was a God of deliverance. He was the God of Moses, the great prophet of the Old Testament who led the Exodus of Israelites out of Egypt and into the Promised Land. He was also the God of Nat Turner, the great prophet of Southampton, Virginia, who sought to lead his people out of slavery too. In "Lift Every Voice and Sing," this is the God who is the subject of praise.

Thou who has by Thy might
Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.

The Politics of Respectability

It was also important for African Americans to combat worldly vices, which they said undermined efforts to project an image of conformity to white standards of appearance and behavior. This was the politics of respectability, which many members of the Black middle class, including James Weldon Johnson, championed. In "Lift Every Voice and Sing," Johnson wrote:

> Lest our feet, stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
>
> Lest our hearts, drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee

The politics of respectability was a form of resistance, a way to combat the debilitating negative stereotypes about African Americans that abounded. But it was also limiting, especially for Black women, because it narrowly defined their roles in life, curbing what they could do and who they could be.

Black Women's Clubs

Despite the drawbacks, many Black middle-class women promoted the politics of respectability through the benevolent societies to which they belonged. In the 1890s, Black women's clubs proliferated, focusing on all manner of social ills plaguing Black communities, from health and sanitation to education and racial violence.

One of the most effective was the Neighborhood Union in Atlanta, Georgia, led by Lugenia Burns Hope. Black women's clubs could be vehicles for direct political engagement. Many organized to secure voting rights for Black women.

In 1896, Black women formed the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, an umbrella organization that facilitated the exchange of ideas and coordinated activities. The association helped uplift African Americans by promoting a culture of service and racial excellence.

Conclusion

"Lift Every Voice and Sing" ends by drawing faith and hope together:

Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand;
True to our God,
True to our native land.

However, the very last line of the song, "True to our native land," is about neither faith nor hope. It is instead about Black consciousness. Harkening back to the call for collective action with which the song began, the last line invokes Africa, the native land from which African Americans had been stolen.

The invocation was an appeal to Black people to draw on their African cultural inheritance, which had played such a vital role in their being able to endure two and a half centuries of enslavement. The invocation, though, was as much about looking forward as it was about looking back, because the struggle to defeat Jim Crow required racial solidarity.

To secure their freedom rights, African Americans had to close ranks and rally around their racial identity. That which had been used to oppress them would liberate them.

As for the song's creator, James Weldon Johnson continued to compose songs after his initial five-year run with his brother on Broadway. He also wrote several acclaimed books, including *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* in 1912, and he published several books of poetry, such as *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse*. But his commitment to Black liberation extended beyond the printed word.

In 1916, he accepted a job as national field secretary for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Although the NAACP was still in its infancy, it was already playing an important role in the fight against Jim Crow.

Lecture 5

The Terror of White Supremacy

On July 28, 1917, 10,000 Black men, women, and children, called together by the NAACP, marched for two miles along Manhattan's Fifth Avenue. This was the Negro Silent Protest Parade, which saw the attendees marching in silence, an act that spoke volumes about the terror that African Americans faced at the hands of raging white mobs.

Terrible Times

The times leading up to the march had been trying. In May 1917, in Memphis, Tennessee, a Black man, Ell Persons, who earned a living as a woodcutter, was accused of killing a white girl simply because he lived near where her body had been found. He was arrested twice and released both times because there was no evidence tying him to the crime.

But the third time he was arrested, he was savagely beaten until he confessed, and eventually, a white mob burned him alive. Exactly one year earlier, 17-year-old Jesse Washington suffered a similar fate in Waco, Texas.

East St. Louis, Illinois, saw violence as well. The city was mostly white, but the African American population had risen sharply and suddenly in recent years. In 1917, the number of Black residents neared 12,000, double what it had been just seven years earlier.

The increased Black presence meant greater competition for jobs, which infuriated white workers, who insisted that employers honor their white privilege by refusing to hire their Black counterparts. But companies like Aluminum Ore didn't hesitate to hire Black workers to replace striking white ones.

On July 1, 1917, a white man drove through East St. Louis's Black side of town, shooting indiscriminately into homes. He escaped unscathed, having caught the residents off guard. Two white men in an identical Ford motorcar driving through the Black community a few hours later were not so lucky. Black residents opened fire on their vehicle, killing both.

White workers pointed to their deaths as evidence of the threat that African Americans posed. They also used it as an excuse to rampage through the Black community. Whites torched Black homes and businesses and shot African Americans attempting to escape the burning buildings. They lynched other Black people as they tried to flee the city.

Quite a few African Americans also drowned when they tried to swim or raft across the Mississippi River. Black journalist Ida B. Wells, who had been chronicling racial terrorism for nearly two decades, described the affair as "an awful orgy of human butchery."

Black people fought back, but there wasn't much they could do to stop the onslaught; they were outnumbered and outgunned. The official death toll was 39, but the actual count easily surpassed 100.

The March

The wanton murder of Black people in East St. Louis, Memphis, and Waco topped the list of "recent horrors" that organizers of the Negro Silent Protest Parade had identified as reasons for the march. The initial thought had not been to march. Instead, the plan was to hold a massive rally at New York City's Carnegie Hall.

But James Weldon Johnson, the poet, songsmith, and playwright who had joined the NAACP as a field secretary at the end of 1916, suggested the more dramatic, silent protest. The idea was to underscore the fierce urgency of the moment and to introduce more people to the eight-year-old civil rights organization. The protest did both.

During the procession, four drummers led the way, marking time with a steady beat. Behind them marched NAACP figures, including Johnson and W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine. A line of flag bearers followed, carrying the national banners of America, Britain, Haiti, and Liberia.

It was a logical selection when viewed through the prism of American race relations. The US flag represented the citizenship claims of African Americans. The British flag reflected the common perception that America's mother country was further along on matters of race, offering a model for the US to follow.

The Haitian banner stood for the revolutionary Black spirit. Haiti was the first independent Black nation in the American hemisphere, having won its liberation from France at the start of the 19th century. And the Liberian flag highlighted the marchers' connection to Africa.

Some 20 rows of children came next. Dressed in Sunday morning finery, they marched 15 abreast, holding hands. The girls filled the first dozen rows. They wore white from head to toe to represent the innocence of childhood. Some of the young men carried signs. "Give us a chance to live," read one.

Next came a seemingly endless stream of women. They too wore white, representing the vulnerability of the victims of racial terrorism in East St. Louis and elsewhere. They marched behind a sign that read, "Race prejudice is the offspring of ignorance and the mother of lynching."

Trailing them were the men, marching shoulder to shoulder with military precision. They wore dark suits to represent Black anger, outrage, and determination. They too marched with signs, including one that read, "Your hands are full of blood."

Contributing to the awesome spectacle were the onlookers, numbering as many as 20,000. They too were silent, in solidarity. Uniformed police officers were there as well, but not as allies.

When the marchers reached their destination, the famous Madison Square, they broke their silence, erupting into applause. They had completed the first mass protest march of its kind. There had been other marches and parades, but none in the name of securing basic freedom rights for African Americans, and none quite as large.

Seizing the Moment

This was the dawn of a new era of Black public protest, one that would mature slowly over the coming decades. The NAACP attempted to take advantage of the publicity generated by the march to pressure the federal government into ending racial terrorism.

Four days after the march, 11 members of the Negro Silent Protest Parade's organizing committee traveled to the nation's capital to petition President Woodrow Wilson and Congress. The petitioners made clear the issue. They wrote that over the previous 31 years, "2,867 colored men and women have been lynched by mobs without trial … and not a single one has been punished for murder." They also mentioned "the latest atrocity in East St. Louis."

The petitioners explained the need for immediate federal intervention, adding that "the States are either unwilling or unable to put down lynching and mob violence." As redress, they asked that "lynching and mob violence be made a national crime punishable by the laws of the United States" through "Federal enactment, or, if necessary, by constitutional amendment."

James Weldon Johnson was among the signatories, as was Black entrepreneur and philanthropist Madam C. J. Walker. The delegation hoped to have an audience with Woodrow Wilson, but the president's private secretary, J. P. Tumulty, turned them away.

He claimed his boss was "too busy" to receive them. It is doubtful that Wilson would have met with the group under any circumstances. The president was an avowed white supremacist responsible for segregating the federal government. Congress was equally unreceptive.

Further Efforts

The refusal of federal officials to receive the NAACP delegation did not keep the leaders of the organization from continuing their drive to end racial terrorism. To dispel the myth that most victims of lynch mobs had attacked white women, a belief that white people used to rationalize the heinous crime, the NAACP published *Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889–1918*.

The report was released two years after the Silent March. The research for it was conducted at the Library of Congress and laid bare the truth that only 16% of the 2,500 African Americans lynched during the three-decade period had even been accused of assaulting a white woman. Most Black lynching victims had drawn the ire of white people for challenging the color line. These violations of Jim Crow ranged from defying the will and whim of white strangers to simply being too prosperous for a Black person.

To keep the issue in the public eye, the NAACP embarked on a publicity campaign that featured regular editorials and feature articles in *The Crisis* magazine. And for dramatic effect, the NAACP hung a huge banner outside of its Fifth Avenue headquarters New York City that read, "A man was lynched yesterday." The banner's stark white lettering on a solid field of black was visible from many blocks away.

Leonidas C. Dyer

The NAACP also worked hard to get federal anti-lynching legislation passed. After some initial hesitancy stemming from dubious constitutional advice, the organization backed the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill, which would have made lynching a federal crime. Four-term Missouri Congressman Leonidas Dyer, a white, reform-oriented politician, introduced the measure in 1918.

Outraged by the horrors committed in East St. Louis the year before, Congressman Dyer sought to empower the Justice Department to prosecute those responsible for such depravity. Dyer also included in the bill provisions to hold local and state officials criminally accountable for refusing to bring perpetrators to justice.

Dyer put his measure before his colleagues repeatedly, continuing throughout the 1920s. But despite Republicans controlling both houses of Congress, the bill languished, a victim of Southern white opposition and Northern white indifference.

Jack Johnson

African Americans followed the NAACP's campaign to end racial terrorism very closely. However, victories against those who supported white supremacy, either explicitly or implicitly, were far and few between, a realization that was dispiriting. That's why African Americans savored every win, including one that came in the boxing ring, when a brash and bold Black pugilist by the name of Jack Johnson became heavyweight champion of the world.

Jack Johnson was born on March 31, 1878, in Galveston, Texas. Both of his parents had known the deprivation of slavery, as well as the hardship of freedom. They provided for Johnson and his eight siblings as best they could.

Johnson began boxing when he was a teenager, drawn to the promise of a payday. Standing more than six feet tall and weighing nearly 200 pounds, Johnson was a force in the ring. By the early 1900s, he was dominating the segregated Black boxing circuit. The Galveston Giant was born, and so was the legend of Jack Johnson.

Johnson was simultaneously a boxer and a promoter, a fighter and an entertainer. He thrilled Black spectators with the power of his punches and unmistakable Blackness. White audiences were taken with him too, but for different reasons. They exoticized Johnson, reducing his mastery of the boxing to natural brutishness. They also feared what he represented: Black manhood, strength, independence, and power.

When Johnson began clamoring for a shot at the world heavyweight championship, African Americans wanted to see it. Whites, however, were less than thrilled by the prospect of Johnson squaring off against a white champion.

Jack Johnson

Johnson finally got his shot at the championship when heavyweight titleholder Tommy Burns, a white Canadian, agreed to fight him on Christmas Day in 1908. The bout was held on the other side of the world, in Australia, almost as if to hide the fact that it was happening. After 14 rounds, Johnson prevailed with a technical knockout. For the first time, a Black man was the heavyweight boxing champion of the world.

African Americans reveled in Johnson's victory. Whites, meanwhile, were aghast, and soon began clamoring for Jim Jeffries, a white former heavyweight champion, to come out of retirement to take the title back for the race. But Johnson wasn't afraid. He wanted to take on Jeffries. Both sides got their wish.

The match took place in Reno, Nevada, on July 4, 1910, before 22,000 people. After 15 rounds, Johnson prevailed. About the Black pugilist, Jeffries said, "I could never have whipped Johnson at my best. I couldn't have hit him. No, I couldn't have reached him in 1,000 years."

While African Americans celebrated the victory, whites rioted. The fight had been filmed, one of several Johnson matches that movie makers recorded to be shown in theaters across the country. There were white riots even after film screenings, a fact that led state authorities to pull reels of the bout and eventually to ban showing boxing films altogether.

Johnson's reign as heavyweight boxing champion only lasted five years. But his audacious behavior, including his lavish spending and especially his gallivanting with white women, only fueled white rage. In 1913, he was convicted by an all-white jury of violating the Mann Act, which made it a crime to transport a woman across state lines for purposes of prostitution.

Whites called it justice; African Americans called it what it was: a bogus charge and a sham trial. Rather than go to prison, Johnson fled the country. He defended his title overseas for two years before being knocked out in a title fight in Cuba in the 26th round.

Johnson's triumphs in the ring did not lift any African Americans out of poverty (save for himself, for a while). They also didn't advance the cause of anti-lynching. In fact, in the opinion of some Black activists, including W. E. B. Du Bois, his antics outside of the ring made it more difficult to disabuse white people of the belief that Black men were sexual predators.

Still, for African Americans, his achievements were a point of pride as well as a source of inspiration. That was what they needed as they marched toward freedom.

Lecture 6

World War I: Hell in Our Own Land

The United States officially entered World War I in April 1917. One year later, with the draft in full swing, W. E. B. Du Bois, the editor of the NAACP's *Crisis* magazine, penned a piece titled "Close Ranks" urging African Americans to support the nation's war effort. Du Bois concluded his patriotic call to arms by underscoring that because Black people have to contend with racism, they "make no ordinary sacrifice" for America. "But," he said, "we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills."

Motivations and Fear

Du Bois had good reason to believe that African Americans would heed the call to rally around the American flag as the country went to war. From the bloody battle of Bunker Hill at the start of the American Revolution to the decisive battle of San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War, African Americans had fought for this country with honor and distinction.

Patriotism motivated some. But a great many more viewed military service less as a moral obligation to the nation and more as an opportunity to secure citizenship rights through displays of courage and valor. In the parlance of the early 20th century, military service was a way for Black men to prove their manhood, which people considered to be a prerequisite for equal treatment.

But many whites viewed Black men in uniform as an existential threat to white supremacy. White Southerners especially feared Black soldiers, convinced that they would take the fighting spirit that military service imbued and direct that energy toward dismantling Jim Crow.

After more than a century of military service and sacrifice, Black men were no closer to having their manhood recognized then they had been when the first Black patriot shouldered a musket in the name of the new nation. Thus, on the eve of America's entry into World War I, the pressing concern among African Americans was if their military service would result in anything different.

Events in Houston

The same month that *The Crisis* magazine ran Du Bois's editorial, the US War Department sent the all-Black 3rd Battalion of the 24th Infantry Regiment to Houston, Texas. On paper, the assignment was simple. The army was building a new training base in the Houston area, and the War Department wanted the detachment to guard the construction site.

The placement of several hundred Black troops deep in the heart of Texas rankled local whites. Houston police were especially uneasy. Local authorities vigorously enforced the color line, insisting that Black soldiers abide by Jim Crow laws and customs under penalty of arrest, beating, or worse. But Black service members refused to be cowed. The escalating tension proved deadly.

On August 23, 1917, a rumor rippled through the barracks of the 3rd Battalion that one of their own, Corporal Charles Baltimore, had been killed by Houston police. His crime: trying to protect a Black woman from police harassment.

Fed up, as many as 150 members of the regiment defied a command from superiors to stand down and marched into town, weapons at the ready, seeking justice. As it turned out, their fellow soldier had survived the police beating, but given the intensity of police harassment, the soldiers knew that if the rumor of the police killing was not true this time, it would be true next time.

When the soldiers reached downtown, a posse of armed whites was waiting. Words were exchanged, and eventually a shootout occurred. Hours passed before the bullets stopped flying, and by time they did, more than a dozen local whites, including five policemen, had been killed. Four Black infantrymen lost their lives as well.

The soldiers viewed their actions as an expression of collective self-defense. The military saw the clash much differently and charged 63 soldiers with disobeying orders, mutiny, murder, and aggravated assault. In the largest court-martial in US history, 13 soldiers were sentenced to death; they all swung from gallows constructed specifically for the hanging on December 10, 1917.

The army tried another 55 soldiers over the next few months, sentencing 16 to die. Six of these soldiers were executed, while 10 had their sentences commuted to life in prison by President Woodrow Wilson, who finally yielded to public pressure and intervened. The men whose lives had been spared joined dozens of others who had been sentenced to life in prison.

African Americans were outraged by the Jim Crow treatment that the men of the 3rd Battalion received at the hands of Houston police. And they were infuriated by the Jim Crow justice meted out by military officials.

Hesitancy

The so-called Houston mutiny caused many African Americans to balk at Du Bois's suggestion that they answer the government's call to arms. Their hesitancy stemmed in part from the fact that it was impossible to ignore the pernicious effects of racism.

African Americans were also turned off by the hypocrisy behind President Wilson's claim that the chief aim of the war was to "make the world safe for democracy." The National Negro League, the old business arm of educator Booker T. Washington, who had passed away in 1915, decried this grandiose assertion. A statement released by the organization at its annual convention in August 1917 read in part, "We cannot make the world safe for democracy unless our country is safe for democracy."

Military Policies

As the war raged, so did the debate among African Americans about serving in the military. Although the issue remained unsettled, 1 million African Americans responded to the draft call, prompting all-white, local draft boards to induct some 370,000 Black men into the army. But joining a Jim Crow army meant separate and unequal everything.

Racist beliefs were ubiquitous among whites in the military, from officials in Washington to commissioned officers and soldiers in the field. They insisted that African Americans lacked the intellectual ability, courage, and moral character to serve in leadership positions.

These beliefs translated into military policies that discriminated against African Americans. Black soldiers bedded down in areas apart from whites that were often overcrowded and lacked proper sanitation facilities. They received separate training that rarely prepared them for anything beyond menial labor. And they suffered tremendous verbal and physical abuse at the hands of blatantly racist white officers and soldiers.

But African Americans' long history of meritorious combat service could not be ignored. Acknowledging this tradition, military officials created two combat divisions, the 92nd and 93rd, exclusively for African Americans.

The 92nd and 93rd Divisions

The 93rd Division was made up mostly of National Guard units from Northern cities like New York, Chicago, and Washington DC. With the National Guard as its foundation, the 93rd had a preexisting leadership structure that included African Americans.

But the 92nd Division, which consisted mainly of draftees, needed officers. Military officials were content to have white men lead these troops. And like the Union Army officials in charge of reconstructing the South after the Civil War,

they were most interested in having Southern white men command, believing that they knew best how to extract the most out of the formerly enslaved.

African Americans knew better, prompting civil rights activists, led by the Black press and the NAACP, to lobby the army for Black officers. The pressure paid off. Military officials agreed to include African Americans in the officer corps of the 92nd Division and created the Colored Officers Training Camp, a segregated site in Fort Des Moines, Iowa, to prepare an elite group of African Americans for command.

The camp opened in June 1917 with 1,250 candidates. Among those who sought an officer's commission was a brilliant young man from Washington DC named Charles Hamilton Houston.

Officer training was grueling, made even more insufferable by the racist attitudes and behavior of the white instructors. Still, Houston trained hard, received a commission as a first lieutenant, and was assigned to an infantry training unit. Houston was one of 639 Black men to earn an officer's commission at the camp.

Problems in Combat

Charles Hamilton Houston and his fellow Black officers were among the most gifted and accomplished young Black men in America. Unfortunately, their talent was wasted in the army. Military officials refused to promote any of them above the rank of captain. They had far more faith in the incompetent, racist white officers that they had initially

selected to command the 92nd Division then they had in the elite cadre of Black men they had just entrusted with new authority.

Poor leadership on the part of white commanders combined with poor training of Black soldiers was a recipe for disaster. Not surprisingly, when elements of the 92nd Division were finally deployed to Europe and sent into combat along the Western Front, they did not perform well.

On September 28, 1918, when the 92nd Division's ill-prepared 368th Regiment encountered heavy German fire during an offensive near the Argonne Forest in northeastern France, several companies fell back prematurely and chaotically to the trenches to regroup. White companies retreated too, but critics of Black soldiers focused only on the Black units.

The Harlem Hellfighters

Those who were fond of pointing to the failings of the 92nd Division's 368th Regiment ignored the remarkable accomplishments of the 93rd Division's 369th Regiment, the famed Harlem Hellfighters. As America geared up for the Great War, Black Harlemites lobbied the governor of New York to allow African Americans to join the state's National Guard. The governor eventually relented, paving the way for the formation of New York's 15th National Guard Regiment, headquartered in Harlem, in 1916.


William Hayward

To lead the Black troops, the governor tapped William Hayward. Hayward had previously served as a colonel in the Nebraska National Guard. Hayward hired both white and Black officers, the former to please the governor and the later to please Harlem.

He also reached out to James Reese Europe, an accomplished and classically trained African American musician and ragtime performer, to lead the regimental band. He hoped that a stellar band would boost enthusiasm for the new unit and attract more recruits. Much to Hayward's delight, Europe enlisted as a lieutenant and brought with him several of Harlem's best musicians. Very soon, the unit was all the rage in Harlem.

Enthusiasm for the regiment extended to African American women. All troops, regardless of their race, faced challenges when it came to having everything they needed to survive and thrive at home and abroad. White soldiers, however, had better-resourced national service organizations such as the Red Cross and the YWCA to help them.

African American women joined these organizations and did what they could to direct resources their way, but they also organized on their own, often through the auspices of the National Association of Colored Women and other Black women's clubs. In addition, they established local groups. In New York, they created the Women's Auxiliary of the New York 15th National Guard to provide direct support to Harlem's soldiers.

Early in 1918, New York's 15th, now folded into the US Army's 93rd Division as the 369th Infantry Regiment, landed in Brest, France, 2,000 Black men strong. As soon as the troops disembarked from their segregated transport ship, the regimental band delighted French onlookers by playing a new arrangement of the French national anthem. Jazz, America's most authentic sound, had arrived in Europe.

The 369th had been training for combat in Spartanburg, South Carolina, enduring the racism of the white Southerners, to prepare for battle. But as was so often the case with Black troops, once they were in the theater of war, white field commanders assigned them to the Army Service Forces to perform labor-intensive tasks such as unloading supplies from ships.

Dissatisfied, the 369th accepted a reassignment to the French army, which solved several political problems for General John Pershing, the commander of the American Expeditionary Force. It satisfied America's European allies who had been clamoring for American reinforcements. It preserved the autonomy of the American Expeditionary Force, which President Wilson craved. And it kept white American soldiers from having to fight alongside African American soldiers.

Over the course of the war, General Pershing reassigned three additional African American infantry regiments from the 93rd Division to the French army. For Black soldiers, attaching to a European ally was not ideal, but it was far better than spending the war cleaning latrines.

The 369th spent three weeks training with French forces before being sent into combat on April 15th, 1918, a full month before American-led troops saw their first real action. Trench warfare was a horror, but the Harlem Hellfighters lived up to their nickname, demonstrating ferocity and courage in the face of a German offensive that lasted three months.

The unit spent 191 days on the front lines, more than any other American fighting group. They experienced some of the war's most intense fighting. And they suffered 1,500 casualties, more than any other US regiment.

The Harlem Hellfighters returned stateside one year after landing in France. They traversed the Atlantic aboard another segregated ship. But unlike their initial departure, when few outside of the Black community had marked the occasion, they returned to a hero's welcome.

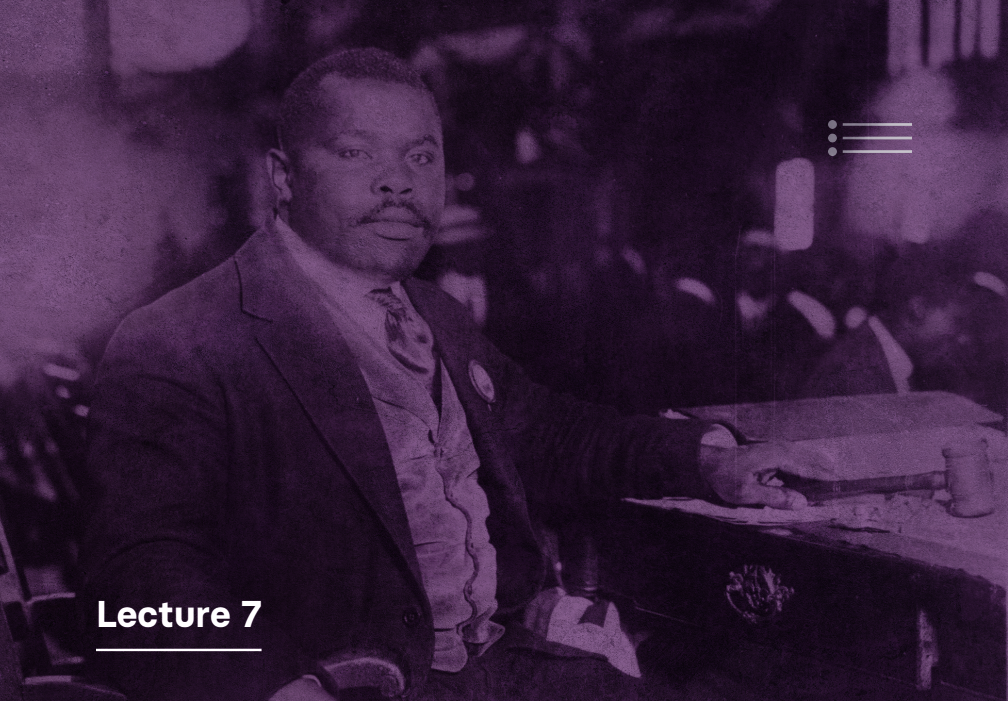
On February 17, 1919, tens of thousands of New Yorkers, Black and white, lined Fifth Avenue to cheer the returning soldiers of the 369th on parade. As the parade progressed, it was as if white Americans had finally closed ranks around African Americans.

However, the moment lasted only as long as the parade. That year, city streets from Charleston, South Carolina, to Chicago, Illinois, ran red with the blood of African

Americans as raging white mobs, determined to reassert white supremacy, attacked and killed Black men, women, and children indiscriminately.

World War I was supposed to be the war to end all wars; it wasn't. It was supposed to make the world safe for democracy; it didn't. It was supposed to advance the struggle for African American freedom and equality; it didn't do that either.

In May 1919, one month before the Allied powers and Germany signed the Treaty of Versailles, officially ending World War I, Du Bois penned another editorial in *The Crisis* magazine. In this one, titled "Returning Soldiers," he declared that African Americans had "fought gladly and to the last drop of blood" to make the world safe for democracy. Now, they fully intended to "fight a sterner, longer, more unbending battle against the forces of hell in our own land."



Lecture 7

Marcus Garvey Builds a Black Nation

On the third anniversary of the NAACP's Negro Silent Protest Parade, another march took place in New York City. The 1920 march celebrated answers to the challenges created by the color line offered by the Honorable Marcus Garvey, the 32-year-old founder of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA).

Garvey's Vision

The march was huge, headed by Garvey himself. When the parade reached Madison Square Garden, the crowd filed inside. The building had permanent seating for 8,000 people and every seat was quickly taken. UNIA conventioneers filled about 2,000 of them, while regular UNIA members and the general public occupied the rest.

When Garvey took the stage, he shared his bold vision for rescuing African Americans from Jim Crow. Garvey urged his followers to do three things: to put the race first, to build wealth through Black-owned businesses, and to emigrate to Africa. The last point was a central tenet of Garveyism. Garvey insisted that African Americans had no future in the United States, so they had to reclaim Africa.

Garvey's philosophy resonated with the Black masses for several reasons. First, it offered them a blueprint for enjoying their freedom rights. Second, Garveyism spoke to African Americans' strongly held belief in Black nationalism, an approach to improving Black life that centered on racial solidarity and Black institution building. And third, Garveyism reflected Black emigration sentiment.

The idea that Black people had to find some place other than where they were to thrive was a deeply rooted strain of Black political thought.

Marcus Garvey's Background

Garvey was from the British colony of Jamaica. He was born on August 17, 1887, in St. Ann's Bay. Eventually, he went to Kingston, where he came to manage a print shop by the age of 20. He became active in the local labor union.

Garvey's experience with organized labor sparked his curiosity about the intersection of race, politics, and economics in other countries. To quench this thirst, he traveled to Central America in 1910. He spent a couple of years in the region, earning a living as a newspaper editor and writing about the poor conditions of Black migrant workers on plantations.

He headed to London in 1912 and was disappointed by the conditions that he found there for Black people as well. He hadn't made it to the United States yet but was terribly disturbed by what he read in Booker T. Washington's autobiography *Up from Slavery*. The famous Black educator painted a grim picture of African American life in the years since emancipation.

The UNIA Forms

Seeking to make matters better, Garvey returned to Jamaica in 1914 and founded the UNIA. Working alongside his future wife, the Jamaican-born Amy Ashwood, he tried to build support for his new organization on the island. However, the UNIA didn't take hold at first.

The discriminatory treatment of Jamaican men by the British army during World War I politicized people in much the same way it politicized African American veterans like Charles Hamilton Houston, making the Black nationalist organization more appealing. But by then, Garvey was looking for more fertile soil and had turned his attention toward the United States.

Garvey arrived in the United States in March 1916. He stepped off a steamship in New York City, and after getting settled in Harlem, he began spreading the word about his movement. Intrigued by Garvey's views, a young Black socialist organizer, A. Philip Randolph, who edited the widely read magazine *The Messenger*, invited Garvey to give his first formal public lecture.

Garvey leapt at the opportunity, but the speech didn't go well because of Garvey's nerves. To prevent such a catastrophe from ever happening again, Garvey studied the oratory of the leading white evangelical preachers who frequented New York City and who drew thousands to their revivals.

From them he learned a new speaking style. After a few months of close study, Garvey had transformed himself into a dynamic, high-intensity orator. Now when he lectured, his voice boomed, his arms flailed, and his audiences became enraptured.

Garvey embarked on a yearlong speaking and listening tour, visiting 38 states, including several in the Deep South. Seeing the conditions under which African Americans lived and labored confirmed for him that Black America needed him, his ideas, and the UNIA. When he returned to New York after his year of travel, Garvey established the UNIA's headquarters in Harlem.

The UNIA's Activities

Harlem was a logical place for Garvey to plant the organization's red, black, and green flag. The Great Migration was underway. Millions of Black Southerners were on the move, fleeing the poverty and violence of the Jim Crow South in search of better opportunities and safety in the urban North.

To reach Harlem's Black residents, Garvey spoke nightly on street corners, espousing his brand of Black nationalism. With his new speaking style, the crowds became regular and quickly grew. More and more people became dues-paying members of the UNIA.

To reach an audience beyond Harlem's street corners, Garvey launched the *Negro World*, the official organ of the UNIA. He started the paper in 1918. It was a fabulous success. By 1920, the *Negro World*'s circulation reached 200,000, making it the most widely read newspaper in Black America.

The newspaper contained editorials, poems, essays, and news articles stressing the beauty of Blackness. The *Negro World* also emphasized the benefits of Black businesses, championing the advantages of Black economic independence and promoting investment in UNIA ventures.

Foremost among the UNIA enterprises was the Black Star Line, a shipping company. It didn't consist of much more than a handful of old freighters, but the condition of the aging fleet didn't matter much to the thousands of African Americans who scraped together a few dollars to purchase one or two shares in the company. They were investing in

The Indispensable Weekly
The Voice of the Awakened Negro—The Peerless Paper

Guaranteed Circulation 50,000
Reaching the Mass of Negroes Throughout the World

Negro World

ONE GOD, ONE AIM, ONE DESTINY

A Newspaper Devoted Solely to the Interests of the Negro Race

VOL. VIII. No. 24 NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JULY 31, 1920 PRICE: THREE CENTS IN GREATER NEW YORK; FIVE CENTS ELSEWHERE IN THE U. S. A.; TEN CENTS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES

GREAT WORLD CONVENTION OF NEGROES

Members of the Race From All Parts of the World to Assemble at Liberty Hall, New York, Sunday, August 1, at 10 A. M.—Biggest and Most Representative Assemblage in History of the Race

CONSTITUTION OF NEGRO LIBERTY IS TO BE WRITTEN

FELLOW MEN OF THE NEGRO RACE, *Greetings:*

This is to inform you that on Sunday, August 1, the Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities' League of the World will call its great convention to order at 10 A. M. in Liberty Hall.

Millions of people have been looking towards this [illegible] manhood, to demonstrate to the world the seriousness of his intention towards world conditions. It was thought impossible a couple of years ago for the Negro to organize for any definite purpose, but it is an acknowledged fact today that the Universal Negro Improvement Association has done the impossible in the space of two and a half years. We have been able to organize three and a half million men and women of our race with a definite plan; the plan of a redeemed Africa; the plan of a free race. This Convention, which will assemble for the first time on Sunday morning at 10 o'clock in Liberty Hall, will go down on the pages of history as the greatest assemblage of Negroes for the last fifteen hundred years. I now send out a last call to all the Negro peoples of the world to be represented at this Convention. It must be remembered that all the problems confronting the race will be discussed during the thirty-one days of August; that no phase of the Negro question will be shelved. Every complaint will be listened to and steps taken to remedy existing wrongs. When the Convention adjourns on August 31 [illegible]

in a man bearing likeness to his Creator. As a man the new Negro shall go forward and demand from the world all those things to which he is entitled. The glorious Continent of Africa stands to be redeemed. A mighty nation must be built in Africa. Within the next fifty years the Imperial Parliament of Afri[illegible] must stand out among the great Parliaments of the [illegible]

of the four hundred million members of our race. The black man refuses to be dictated to by foreign Parliaments and alien statesmen. This is the time when all races feel it incumbent upon them to protect their own interests, and if sixty million Anglo-Saxons can be dominant in Europe, and a few million French and Italians and Germans, we do not see why we should allow ourselves to be dominated and abused by alien power. The Convention of the Universal Negro Improvement Association shall give new life and new spirit to the Negro peoples of the world; hence, I ask that every Negro lend his moral and financial aid to this great cause. The first meeting of the Convention will be at 10 o'clock on Sunday morning, August 1; the second meeting at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, and the third at 8 o'clock in the night. On the morning of the 2nd the Convention will assemble at 10 o'clock, to adjourn for a parade at 2 o'clock and to assemble at 8 o'clock sharp in Madison Square Garden in a great public demonstration. Twenty-five thousand delegates will be in line to march in the great parliament of the Convention. All members of the Asso[illegible] New York, and visiting Divisions are asked to

delegates to the Convention are requested to have their delegates report to the Registrar's office at 56 West 135th Street, New York City, before they attend at Liberty Hall, so that proper credentials can be given by the Registrar for admission to the Convention. Let your thoughts for the entire month of August be centered around the great Convention [illegible] Liberty Hall. Pray for the success of this

will come a new people, a new purpose, and a new nation realized.

Immediately after the convention the Black Star Line contemplates opening up direct routes between America and Africa and South America. More ships must be bought, and bigger ships. The Directors, therefore, ask that every Negro make now a desperate effort to buy more shares in the Corporation. The more ships the Black Star Line has the better accommodations we will be able to give to the race. Liberia must be built. Men must be transported. Skilled mechanics and craftsmen are wanted. We cannot transport them in balloons, in air ships; we can only transport them in the ships of the Black Star Line. First of all, we must buy ships to make transportation possible. Hundreds of miles of railroads must be laid down in Liberia. Docks must be built; educational institutions must be built; industrial enterprises must be constructed, and all will mean the transportation of skilled men from this Western Hemisphere, so we ask that every Negro who can afford it to buy more shares in the Black Star Line. You may buy from one to five hundred at Five Dollars each. My advice to you is [illegible]

the idea of connecting the African diaspora through oceanic trade and travel. From Harlem to Helena, Arkansas, Black families cherished their Black Star Line stock certificates.

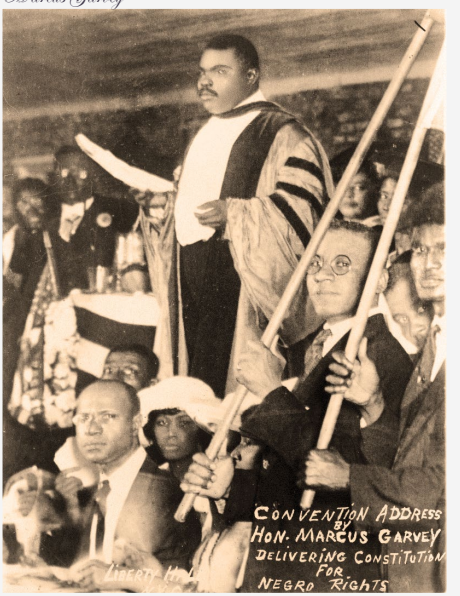
Additionally, the UNIA was a political incubator, politicizing and training African Americans, including Black women, for future leadership. Many Black nationalist women began their political activism in the UNIA and gained a sense of empowerment as members of the organization. Amy Ashwood, Garvey's first wife and a champion of Garveyism, was one such woman.

A Convention and a Declaration

By the time of the UNIA's 1920 convention, Garvey had emerged as a leading spokesperson for Black America, especially for the Black working class. But Garvey had a grander vision. He was looking to build a government that worked on behalf of Black people. When the grand parade through Harlem ended, the work of building that government began.

Throughout the month of August 1920, convention delegates gathered at the UNIA's Liberty Hall in the heart of Harlem. There they created a government-in-waiting for Africa that would supposedly, one day, rule a liberated and united continent. It was a grandiose gesture that was unlikely ever to be realized, but that didn't stop Garvey from orchestrating his own election as provisional president of Africa.

More practically and more significantly, the conventioneers spent considerable time drafting the *Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World*, a remarkable statement



outlining the injustices that people of African descent suffered at the hands of people of European descent. The document also identified fundamental human rights, called common rights, that all people were entitled to enjoy.

Additionally, the *Declaration of Rights* outlined grievances, and it highlighted two elements of the American political and legal system that were especially troubling for African Americans. The first was the absence of due process under the law, which contributed to the rise of lynching. The second political injustice was disenfranchisement. Economic injustice worried the Garveyites as well. And they understood that a widespread belief in white supremacy was at the heart of the problems that African Americans faced.

After summarizing the social, political, and economic problems confronting African Americans, the *Declaration of Rights* listed 54 demands that Garveyites deemed necessary to "stimulate [the race] to overcome the handicaps and difficulties surrounding it, and to push forward to a higher and grander destiny." Garvey and his followers called for ending racial discrimination in housing, employment,

public accommodations, and education. They asked that African Americans be allowed to "elect their own representatives" so that they could "exercise control over [their own] community."

They insisted on Black representation on juries to ensure "even-handed justice before all courts of law." They asserted their belief in freedom of speech and freedom of the press, and they claimed their right to "travel unmolested … as other men." They advocated self-defense, and they reserved the right to revolt.

The Garveyites spoke undeniable truths in the *Declaration of Rights*, but none of the problems or even the demands that they identified were new. The impediments to equality that African Americans faced in 1920 were the same ones that African Americans had been struggling to overcome since emancipation. However, the vehicle through which they were trying to disrupt the status quo was new, as was how they expressed their grievances and demands.

Conclusion

By 1920, there was no denying the importance of Garvey and the popularity of Garveyism. But he had his detractors, including W. E. B. Du Bois, who publicly lambasted Garvey for his propensity for showmanship. Du Bois also ridiculed his return-to-Africa program as unrealistic.

But even Garvey's most ardent critics conceded that he had captured the imagination of the Black masses by ably articulating their grievances and giving clear voice to their demands. The UNIA's *Declaration of Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World* reflected this accomplishment.

Unfortunately, Garvey's efforts to secure freedom rights for African Americans proved insufficient for reaching the goal of Black liberation. To be fair, the task was daunting, given the conditions at the time. But missteps, including financial mismanagement by deceitful deputies, sapped the strength of the UNIA, making an already difficult task even more challenging. It also created an opening that the federal government exploited to completely undermine Garvey's efforts.

The Bureau of Investigation, the precursor to the FBI, infiltrated the UNIA with at least one Black undercover agent. It arrested Garvey in 1922 for mail fraud, for selling stock in a ship that the Black Star Line had not yet purchased. Garvey was convicted and imprisoned in 1925. Two years later, President Calvin Coolidge, hoping to stamp out Garveyism for good, commuted his sentence and deported him to Jamaica.

UNIA membership dwindled in the absence of its charismatic leader, and by the time Garvey died in 1940, the organization was a faint shadow of what it had been 20 years earlier. But Black nationalism did not die on the vine of Garveyism when the patriarch of the movement was no longer able to nourish it. Women like Amy Ashwood formed their own Black nationalist groups after the UNIA declined.

Lecture 8

The "New Negro" Fights Back

Claude McKay's 1919 poem "If We Must Die" was a call to action, a plea to African Americans—his kinsmen—to aggressively defend themselves against the savagery of white mobs that rampaged across Black America in the summer of 1919. If African Americans were destined to die at the hands of a "murderous, cowardly pack," as McKay put it, then let them die defiantly, striking back, fighting back. Racial terrorists—the common foe of Black people—had to pay a price for their depredations. The anger, urgency, and boldness of McKay's verse captured the insurgent spirit of a new generation of African Americans, young people who had been born after emancipation and came of age during the ascendency of Jim Crow. To use the parlance of the day, they were New Negroes, and they were determined to live full, free lives. And just like McKay, they were willing to challenge white supremacists head-on.

McKay Finds a Network

Claude McKay was born in Clarendon Parish, Jamaica, in 1889, the son of small farmers. In 1914, he moved to New York City, where he pursued his passion for writing. To pay his bills, McKay worked various entry-level jobs around the city, including as a dining car waiter for the Pennsylvania Railroad. These jobs exposed him to all sorts of racial discrimination. The color line dictated where Black people could eat, sleep, work, and play.

Claude McKay

His odd jobs also introduced him to a bevy of working-class Black radicals, men and women born in the US and the Caribbean who embraced various iterations of communism, socialism, and Black nationalism. One of the groups that McKay joined was the African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption.

The African Blood Brotherhood, or ABB, was the brainchild of Cyril Briggs, a native of the British Caribbean colony of Nevis who immigrated to New York City in 1905. Like fellow leader Marcus Garvey, Briggs believed that Africa should be for Africans. But unlike Garvey, he did not believe that the UNIA leader should be the head of whatever government emerged to govern Black people. Therefore, Briggs founded the African Blood Brotherhood, which he publicized as an alternative to the UNIA.

The ABB attracted only a couple thousand members, unlike the hundreds of thousands who joined the UNIA. But those who signed up, like Claude McKay, were deeply committed to the right of Black people to defend themselves against white mobs. They embraced the idea of an independent, Black, socialist commonwealth.

The Year 1919

Between odd jobs, McKay wrote. He based his prose and verse on insights gleaned from his work experiences and his discussions with Black and white radicals. His poetry appeared in literary and political periodicals popular among New York City socialists.

Max and Crystal Eastman, the brother-sister duo who founded and edited *The Liberator*, the most influential radical monthly of the day, became enamored with McKay. In the July 1919 issue of their magazine, they debuted six of his poems; "If We Must Die" was one of them.

The feeling among African Americans in the summer of 1919 was equal parts despondency and determination. That year, 83 Black people died at the hands of lynch mobs. And from late winter to early autumn, racial unrest occurred in two dozen American cities and towns, claiming the lives of more than 250 African Americans. These were episodes of violence started by white people and permitted by white politicians and police.

Chicago saw the worst of it. On July 27 at Lake Michigan, a white beachgoer threw stones at Eugene Williams, a 17-year-old Black youth in the lake. He had floated across an imaginary line separating the white part of the beach from the Black part. The rocks hit their intended target, and Williams drowned.

When the police arrived, they refused to arrest anyone, further infuriating African American beachgoers and emboldening white beachgoers. The Black and white groups exchanged heated words and then blows. The fighting quickly spread beyond the beach. As African Americans retreated to the Black section of the South Side of Chicago, an area known as the Black Belt, a white mob formed and attacked any Black person it happened to find.

For a full week, white mobs invaded Black neighborhoods, attacking African Americans. The police did little to stop the white marauders, leaving African Americans to defend themselves, resulting in several pitched gun battles. Eventually, the governor summoned the Illinois Army National Guard. Only then did whites stop terrorizing Chicago's Black residents. But the damage had been done. Twenty-three African Americans had been killed, along with 15 whites, and several hundred people had been injured.

The Preconditions

Although the precipitating events that sparked the so-called Red Summer of 1919 varied from place to place, the underlying preconditions were fundamentally the same.

These were tough economic times. When America entered World War I, the federal government placed stringent controls on agricultural and industrial production to make sure the economy could meet the needs of the military. When the war ended, the government removed these economic controls. Consumers responded by rushing to purchase goods that had been rationed, while businesses raised prices.

Inflation followed. And as the cost of things outpaced people's earnings, workers in all sorts of industries went on strike. Economic anxiety ran high. The Bolsheviks had seized control of Russia's government in 1917, encouraging communists around the world to foment Marxist revolution and inspiring anarchists in the United States to sow seeds of chaos by bombing political targets. The ensuing Red Scare provided those who wanted to silence their rivals with a bulletproof justification for their actions, no matter how extreme those actions might be. That pretext was patriotism.

Additionally, this was a time of heighted racial tension in cities in the North and Midwest because of exploding Black populations. Starting in 1915 and lasting through the end of the Great War, nearly 500,000 African Americans migrated from the rural South to the urban North and Midwest. These migrants hit the road and the rails because the South offered too few opportunities and too many hardships.

The possibility of factory work in Northeastern and Midwestern cities prompted many Black people to head North. In the South, most African Americans had no choice but to work in white people's fields and kitchens. It wasn't slavery, but it wasn't that far from it either.

Some Black workers in the South did find work in trades such as blacksmithing and carpentry, legacy trades from the era of slavery. Usually residing in urban areas, they earned more than fieldhands, but it was becoming increasingly difficult to earn a living plying a skilled trade.

But in the industrial North, there were plenty of jobs. World War I had created a severe shortage of factory workers. Northern factory jobs paid well. African Americans could make considerably more than they could in the South, especially if they landed a job that matched their skill set.

Still, better pay did not mean equal pay. In many areas, white workers received higher wages than their Black counterparts. There were also many jobs that African Americans simply could not get because companies refused to hire Black workers to fill them.

The racial discrimination that Southern Black migrants faced in Northern cities wasn't limited to employment. As in the South, Jim Crow shaped the contours of Black life. The key to Northern Jim Crow restrictions was housing.

Where a person lived dictated what a person had access to. Northern whites—realtors, homeowners, landlords, renters, social workers, and city planners—intentionally limited where African Americans could live, confining them to specific sections of cities. Municipal governments intentionally diverted public resources away from segregated Black neighborhoods. White landlords also charged African Americans exorbitant rents, making Black renters pay more for less.

Factory owners made tensions worse by pitting white workers against African Americans. When white workers went on strike, they brought in Black workers to replace them. When this happened in East St. Louis in

Claude McKay's Work

● Throughout the 1920s, Claude McKay captured the defiant spirit that animated African Americans. He wrote pieces for *The Liberator* and *Negro World*. He published another book of poetry, *Harlem Shadows*, in 1922, and his first novel, *Home to Harlem*, in 1928. McKay featured Harlem prominently in his work. Harlem was an important place where Black novelists, essayists, songwriters, musicians, scholars, activists, and artists gathered.

1917, violence ensued. Runaway inflation and the Red Scare added to this combustible mix—kindling tossed on top of smoldering embers. The result was the Red Summer.

Moving against Jim Crow

African Americans pushed back hard against racial discrimination in the North. They did so individually, with Ossian Sweet serving as an example. After earning his medical degree from Howard University in Washington DC in 1921, Sweet moved to Detroit, Michigan, where he married Gladys Mitchell.

After establishing his practice, the couple searched for a home for their growing family. In 1925, they found and purchased a brick bungalow at 2905 Garland Street, a corner lot in a white working-class neighborhood. It was smaller than what they wanted, and they paid a premium for what they got—$18,500, which was $6,000 more than market value—but they had their home.

The Sweets waited for summer to end and for whites who had been enraged by attempts by other Black families to move into white neighborhoods to calm down. Even still, the Sweets expected trouble, so when it came time to move in, Ossian called on friends and fraternity brothers to help him guard his new house.

It was a good thing that he did. A mob formed outside 2905 Garland the night the Sweets unloaded their possessions, and the same thing happened the next night. When the second mob showed signs of storming the house, one of Ossian's compatriots, all of whom were armed, opened fire, wounding one white man and killing another.

Everyone inside the house was arrested, and most were charged with murder. An initial trial resulted in a hung jury. However, Clarence Darrow, the most famous lawyer in America, won an acquittal for Ossian Sweet. An all-white jury accepted his self-defense argument. The not-guilty verdict led prosecutors to drop the charges against the others. It was a rare but meaningful legal victory.

African Americans also rallied against Northern Jim Crow collectively. For instance, to contest job discrimination, they unionized. Porters employed by the Pullman Company formed the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925. Additionally, African Americans responded to discrimination outside the South by building up Black communities. Thriving Black business districts emerged in cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

Newspapers played an especially important role in Black political responses to racial discrimination in the North. As Black populations surged in cities outside the South, African Americans joined national civil rights organizations.

In Seattle, the Black elite chartered a branch of the NAACP in 1913 to help fight racial discrimination. A few years later, members of Seattle's Black working class founded two divisions of the UNIA.

Lecture 9

The Scottsboro Boys and the Great Depression

On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed. The American economy was reeling into the Great Depression. Black workers, already teetering on the edge of ruin, felt the downturn the hardest. Within two years, half of all African Americans were out of work.

Seeking Relief

Lacking the resources to weather the storm, most African Americans had to seek public relief. For instance, by 1933, in Akron, Ohio, two-thirds of African Americans received assistance. But in the early years of the Great Depression, relief was wholly inadequate.

Republican president Herbert Hoover rejected calls for direct aid, choosing instead to pump money into the economy through loans to big business. Railroads received checks; people didn't.

State agencies attempted to step up, but these were Jim Crow governments, which meant African Americans almost always received less than whites, if they got anything at all. In Norfolk, Virginia, white families received $2.00 in cash relief, while Black families received just $1.25. In Houston, Texas, Black families got nothing.

Ozie Powell

The Great Depression made work disappear. Seemingly everyone was unemployed and looking for a job, 15-year-old Ozie Powell included. He found irregular employment at sawmills and lumber camps, moving on whenever a job ended.

On March 25, 1931, Powell was in Chattanooga, Tennessee, when he jumped aboard a Southern Railroad freight train bound for Memphis. Eventually, a fight broke out. Powell wasn't involved, but he saw what happened.

There were two groups of teens, one Black and the other white. A white boy intentionally stepped on the hand of a Black teen. Nothing happened at first; the Black teen let it pass. In the Jim Crow South, it was better to ignore such provocations. But then the white boy came back and did it again. Words were exchanged, then punches. The Black teens bested the white ones, throwing them off the train.

It was a minor scuffle, but there were some bruised white egos. The white boys reported that they had been attacked, and the authorities radioed ahead to the next station. When the train pulled into Paint Rock, Alabama, police rounded up everyone on board.

They found nine Black youths: Clarence Norris, Haywood Patterson, Olen Montgomery, Willie Roberson, Andy Wright, Eugene Williams, Charley Weems, Roy Wright, and Ozie Powell. The oldest was 19, and the youngest was 12. Only four of the boys knew each other, and Powell didn't know anyone. None of that mattered to the police, who intended to arrest and charge whoever they found with assault.

However, then the police discovered two white women—Ruby Bates and Victoria Price—who had been riding the rails as well. They were about to charge them with vagrancy and illegal sexual activity when the pair falsely accused the nine Black youths of rape. For the white women, it was a get-out-of-jail-free card. For the Black teens, it was a death sentence.

The police took the boys to Scottsboro, the seat of Jackson County. That evening, the *Jackson County Sentinel* published a story about the "revolting crime." A mob soon formed at the Scottsboro jail. A lynching seemed inevitable, but the sheriff called for the national guard and disbursed the mob. The mob would reassemble two weeks later—in the jury box.

Trials and Retrials

The so-called Scottsboro Nine trials—there would be three of them—began on April 6, 1931. None lasted much more than a day. The two white women testified that they had been assaulted by six in the group, and that was enough for the all-white, all-male jury to convict the nine of rape and recommend death by electrocution. The trial judge affirmed the sentences for all but the 12-year-old Roy Wright because a juror recommended that he receive life.

The Communist Party USA had been closely following developments in Scottsboro and rallied to the defense of the kids. They sent a team of lawyers to handle their appeals and organized support rallies featuring the boys' mothers. The party wanted to free the nine youths. They also wanted to boost Black membership in the party.

Rosa Parks

In Montgomery, Alabama, an activist barber named Raymond Parks also worked to save the boys. He helped raise local awareness about their plight by disseminating news about the case. He even brought food to the boys when they were transferred to Kilby State Prison to await execution. (He met and married his wife during this campaign. She worked with him. This was Rosa Parks.)

Lawyers from the Communist Party's International Labor Defense group appealed the Scottsboro convictions to the US Supreme Court. In November 1932, the court ruled in *Powell v. Alabama* that the defendants deserved to be tried again on the grounds that they did not have adequate representation. Their court-appointed attorney had a drinking problem and failed to provide suitable counsel. The ruling established an important precedent regarding competent representation, one that holds to this day.

During the retrial, Ruby Bates took the stand on behalf of the defense and recanted her testimony. Under oath, she admitted that she had lied. The boys were innocent, she said. But in a Jim Crow courtroom, the truth did not set Black people free. An all-white, all-male jury found Haywood Patterson—the first to be retried—guilty and recommended the death penalty.

In January 1935, the Supreme Court intervened again. In *Norris v. Alabama*, the jury ruled that the systematic exclusion of African Americans from the jury denied the defendants a fair trial by their peers. The court ordered new trials. It was the second landmark ruling tied to the matter at hand. But even that wasn't enough to set the boys free. Additional trials were held, additional guilty verdicts were rendered, and additional death sentences were handed out.

But the grassroots organizing campaign was beginning to pay off. Alabama wanted the case to go away: The negative attention hurt efforts to attract new business to the state, which was desperately needed during those tough economic times.

Seven years after their arrest, the state dropped charges against four of the defendants, including Ozie Powell. But Powell wasn't released with the others. He faced new assault

charges because of a prison altercation. The governor also commuted one sentence to life in prison. That wasn't enough for Raymond Parks, and he was not alone. The organizing continued. In 1946, the three young men still in prison on the original charges, along with Ozie Powell, were paroled.

Aftereffects

Powell had served 15 years. While incarcerated, he was beaten, tortured, and shot in the head by a sheriff. When the whole affair started, he was a shy, industrious 15-year-old kid. When he was finally released, he returned to Georgia. But he was a broken man—mentally, emotionally, and physically. He would never be who he could have been.

Clarence Norris was paroled at the same time as Powell, but he fled north; he didn't trust Alabama anymore. Thirty years later, in 1976, he received a long-overdue pardon.

The Scottsboro tragedy was one sparked by a series of events unique to the Depression. The dire employment situation, especially for unskilled youth, led everyone involved in the case to climb aboard that Southern Railroad freight train as it left Chattanooga.

There were long-standing preconditions at play as well, perhaps most significantly a racially biased criminal justice system. African Americans were keenly aware that the circumstances that ensnared the Scottsboro Boys could trap any member of the Black community.

As people mobilized to free the boys, they set into motion a series of legal challenges to the separate-but-equal doctrine. Overturning *Plessy v. Ferguson* was an essential step in ending what masqueraded as courtroom justice in Jim Crow America.

Charles Hamilton Houston

The Supreme Court was inflexible when it came to the separate-but-equal precedent established in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. But that didn't stop a group of Black lawyers from laying the legal groundwork in the 1930s for the case that overturned *Plessy* in the 1950s.

Plessy did not start Jim Crow; it only affirmed it. But getting the court to walk back the ruling was essential to ending all forms of legal discrimination, including the various kinds that manifested themselves in the Scottsboro case. Charles Hamilton Houston, who became the NAACP's special legal counsel in 1935, understood this.

As the first salaried lawyer on the NAACP's national staff, Houston was responsible for identifying legal cases that the organization should take up. Houston was also put in charge of carrying out the NAACP's legal campaign against segregated education, an area he identified as especially harmful and unfair. Houston viewed segregated education as especially vulnerable to legal scrutiny. It would take time to dismantle, but he insisted that it could be done.

Challenging Jim Crow in court, however, created a conundrum. The NAACP refused to accept segregation in any form out of concern that doing so would legitimize it.

But any lawsuit questioning the constitutionality of separate but equal was sure to lose. The Supreme Court just wasn't budging on *Plessy v. Ferguson*.

Houston helped devise a plan that approached the issue indirectly. He understood that separate would never be equal because segregationists didn't want it to be. He also knew that Southern states did not have the financial resources to provide truly equal accommodations to African Americans. Herein lay the key to the strategy.

The NAACP would take on cases in which separate was not equal, seeking judgments requiring equalization. With patience and persistence, they might be able to secure enough precedent-setting wins to demonstrate that separate could never be equal, thereby weakening the *Plessy* doctrine to the point that it would fall under a direct attack.

Attacking Jim Crow

Houston fired the opening salvo in the attack on Jim Crow in 1936. That year, the NAACP sued the University of Maryland School of Law on behalf of Donald Gaines Murray, an African American who had twice been denied admission to the law school solely because of his race.

When *University of Maryland v. Murray* reached the Supreme Court, Houston's protégé, Thurgood Marshall, argued that "since the State of Maryland [has] not provided a comparable law school for blacks, Murray should be allowed to attend the white university." The court agreed, affirming an earlier ruling by the Maryland Supreme Court

ordering African American students admitted to the law school. It was a precedent-setting victory, a chink in Jim Crow's armor.

Maryland did not have a specific statute on the books banning African Americans from attending its flagship law school. Jim Crow was maintained through admissions decisions. By contrast, Missouri did have a law segregating education. However, it had failed to provide a law school for African Americans. As a result, African Americans had to leave the state to obtain a law degree.

In 1936, Houston filed suit. When *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada* reached the Supreme Court two years later, the justices sided with Houston. Although the court upheld the separate-but-equal doctrine, it ruled that forcing African Americans to leave the state to obtain a law degree violated their constitutional right to equal protection under the law. In essence, the court said that separate had to be equal, an untenable position for states with blanket segregation laws.

The strategy was working, helping Houston and the NAACP inch closer to having the case law they needed to overturn *Plessy* on direct challenge. To focus their efforts, Houston helped found the NAACP Legal Defense Fund in 1940. The fund, which operated independently but alongside its parent organization, named Thurgood Marshall its first director-counsel. Under Marshall's leadership, the LDF continued to take on cases challenging segregation in education.

Houston's work didn't make overturning *Plessy* inevitable; it only made it possible. It also touched just a handful of Black lives directly. But its indirect impact would be profound.

Lecture 10

A New Deal for African Americans

By 1935, federal efforts to alleviate the suffering caused by the Great Depression had mitigated the crisis for some, but hardly for all. The national unemployment rate hovered at 20%. For African Americans, it was much worse. And by the mid-1930s, 45% of all Americans lived in poverty. Again, that number was even higher for African Americans.

Shifting Allegiances

African Americans had supported the Republican Party—the party that had ended slavery and extended voting rights to African Americans—for more than half a century. But in recent years, they had become increasingly disenchanted with the GOP, turned off by its newfound unwillingness to champion civil rights for African Americans.

Earlier, in 1928, there were concerns about Republican Herbert Hoover when he ran for president. He won, and Hoover's actions as president fundamentally changed African Americans' political calculus. Like many Americans, they were deeply troubled and terribly disappointed by his laissez-faire approach to the economic collapse. From the Hoover administration came no jobs for the unemployed, shelter for the homeless, or food for the hungry.

Compounding matters, in March 1930, Hoover nominated an advocate of Black disenfranchisement to fill a vacancy on the US Supreme Court. This was John J. Parker, who had earlier said, "The participation of the Negro in politics is a source of evil and danger to both races."

Alarmed by the prospect of someone with such blatantly racist and unconstitutional views sitting on the bench, the NAACP launched a massive lobbying effort to block Parker's Senate confirmation. They forged an effective coalition with organized labor—Parker was not only anti-Black; he was also anti-union—and managed to defeat the judge's confirmation by a single vote.

But Hoover's eventual opponent in the 1932 election, Democrat Franklin Roosevelt, had issues of his own. He appeared a little too comfortable down in the South, at his Warm Springs, Georgia, retreat, where he traveled often. The Southern wing of the Democratic Party was composed of white supremacists who did not believe African Americans had any rights that the white man was bound to respect.

Also troubling was Roosevelt's role in drafting the Haitian constitution. Haiti was the first independent Black nation in the American hemisphere. But when the US invaded Haiti in 1915 and later installed a government that put American interests above those of the Haitian people, plenty of African Americans were disappointed. The *Cleveland Gazette*, a Black newspaper, blamed the occupation—and specifically the new constitution—for ushering in "the bloodiest chapter in all of the history of Haiti."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

However, by Election Day, Roosevelt had received endorsements from several prominent African Americans. Although he didn't win a majority of Black ballots—that would not happen until 1936, when he won 71% of the Black vote—he received enough to make clear that the political realignment of the Black community was well underway.

Interfering with Aid

During Roosevelt's first 100 days as president, he signed the Federal Emergency Relief Act. The law created the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, or FERA, a granting agency that sent funds to the states. During the agency's two-year existence, it disbursed more than $3 billion in assistance. States used this money to create work and education programs for the unemployed and to make direct cash payments to the unemployable. Some 20 million people benefited directly from its grants.

But the agency's reliance on state and local authorities to distribute relief disadvantaged African Americans. In some places, white authorities brazenly discriminated against African Americans.

Similar problems dogged the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). When the Depression hit, the price of agricultural goods plummeted, forcing hundreds of thousands of farmers onto relief. The AAA was created to regulate crop yields. Reducing the amount of goods brought to market pushed the price of those goods higher. To lower crop yields, the agency paid farmers to leave a portion of their land fallow or to plow up crops already in the ground.

However, in many cases, money meant for Black sharecroppers and tenant farmers never made it to them. The government sent their checks to the white people on whose land they labored. The landowners had a legal obligation to turn the money over, but too often, they never did. They kept the checks for themselves.

Another act, the Social Security Act of 1935, was the centerpiece of the New Deal's social safety net legislation. It provided public assistance to those in need, unemployment compensation for those out of work, and income security for the elderly. Roosevelt touted it as economic security for everyone, but it wasn't. Most African Americans were intentionally excluded.

The Social Security safety net threatened white Southerners' ability to control Black labor. It offered exploited Black workers a modicum of autonomy. They could escape the cotton field and the kitchen by relying on Social Security until they were able to find work that paid a fair wage.

But this wasn't to be. Southern Democrats refused to support the legislation unless it excluded agricultural laborers and domestic workers, the two occupational categories with the highest concentrations of African Americans. Indeed, 65% of African Americans worked in fields or homes. To ensure passage of the legislation, the act excluded these occupations, trapping millions of Black workers in exploitative labor arrangements for another generation.

Grievances

African Americans did not have many options when it came to redressing their grievances. Many chose to write to Roosevelt. For instance, one letter from Reidsville, Georgia, reported that the relief officials were "using up most every thing that you send" and that Black people weren't receiving sufficient aid.

Roosevelt's evening radio addresses—his fireside chats, which he began as soon as he took office—conveyed empathy and accessibility. He also assembled a group of African American thinkers, known as his Black cabinet, to advise him on racial matters.

But Roosevelt received too many letters, from too many people, to read and respond to everyone. The letters made it into his archives, but few made it into his hands.

Complaining about corruption was also extremely dangerous. The cost for challenging a white person for stealing from a Black person ran as high as a person's life. That's why the writer from Reidsville, Georgia, chose not to sign their name to the letter they wrote to Roosevelt. Quite simply, they feared for their life.

That fear was well founded. In Reidsville, in 1907, a mob of local whites, whose identities were known to all because no one wore hoods, lynched four members of one Black family: Sim Padgett, the father; Sula Padgett, the mother; Wilford Padgett, their 21-year-old son; and Dosia Padgett, their 10-year-old daughter.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a banner hung outside the NAACP's New York City headquarters. It read, "A Man Was Lynched Yesterday," and it applied to the state of Georgia 75 times during that span.

Taking Action in Missouri

The lack of viable options for getting the Roosevelt administration to make good on its relief and recovery promises forced Black sharecroppers in the Missouri

bootheel to take extreme action. On a cold January morning in 1939, 1,200 African American men, women, and children pitched tents alongside US Highways 60 and 61 and waited for the world to notice.

They had suffered tremendously since before the Great Depression from grinding poverty, brought about by perpetual debt and racial terror. But their misery had been exacerbated by declining crop prices and made worse by an environmental disaster—the Great Flood of 1937.

Now their homes were being threatened. Planters had been slowly pushing sharecroppers off their land, replacing them with wage workers and mechanical cotton pickers, all incentivized by New Deal farm subsidy programs. A massive wave of evictions loomed.

Desperate and determined, the Black sharecroppers, along with 200 white sharecroppers, made their way to the roadside. The press, alerted in advance, called the event a

strike, but it wasn't. The sharecroppers left because they were about to be kicked off the land; their labor as croppers was no longer wanted.

Although the press mislabeled what was happening, their coverage of the protest was essential. Protest leader William H. Jones explained, "We have no place to go. We don't know whether this will do us any good, but it will show ... people what we are up against."

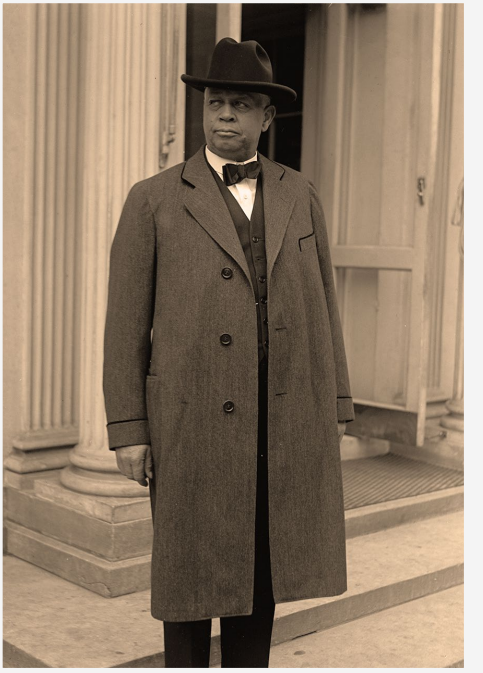
The sight of so many with so little shook people to the core. But it didn't move the American Red Cross, which refused to render aid. And it didn't change the mind of Missouri governor Lloyd C. Stark, who opposed the protest from the start. He ordered state police to relocate the sharecroppers, by force if necessary. "They took us 18 miles back in the woods and dumped us," explained Booker T. Clark, a protester.

However, the protesters had already caught the attention of President Roosevelt, who instructed his secretary of agriculture to assist. Surplus food was sent immediately, as were tents. Emergency cash grants followed.

The plight of the sharecroppers also spurred students at Lincoln University in Jefferson City, Missouri, a Black college founded by Black Civil War veterans, to organize a support campaign. The student effort laid the groundwork for a cooperative farming community for the sharecroppers called Cropperville, which served as a blueprint for 10 additional communities that the federal government established for former sharecroppers.

New Deal Labor Policies

African Americans living in Northern industrial cities faced a similar crisis revolving around jobs and housing. When the Great Depression hit, Black male unemployment surged in the seven leading Northeastern and Midwestern cities from 14% to 40%. For Black women, it jumped from 8% to 45%. By 1937, the unemployment rates hadn't changed that much, only dropping to 32% for Black men and 35% for Black women.



Oscar De Priest

New Deal jobs programs offered African Americans a lifeline. Between 1933 and 1942, the Civilian Conservation Corps employed 3 million unskilled young men between the ages of 18 and 25. That number included 250,000 African Americans.

The corps focused on environmental work—planting trees, constructing trails, and building shelters in national parks and forests. Representative Oscar De Priest of

Illinois, the only Black member of Congress, inserted into the law that created the corps a provision forbidding racial discrimination.

But *Plessy* was still the precedent-setting case on racial segregation, so the corps set up 150 separate Black camps. A couple of these camps had a handful of whites, but officials made sure to locate them outside the South or in remote areas.

In 1935, the Works Progress Administration took the lead in providing public sector work to unemployed Americans. Over eight years, the WPA gave jobs to 8.5 million people. They worked on major infrastructure projects, building roads, bridges, schools, and airfields. The WPA also employed artists, activists, and educators.

A young Ella Baker, who would become one of the most influential grassroots civil rights organizers of the 1950s and 1960s, found work in New York City with the Workers Education Project (WEP), a division of the WPA. The project trained people in urban night schools and residential labor colleges to become community activists and leaders.

New Deal Housing Policies

The public works programs did not end the unemployment crisis for African Americans. However, they did put enough people back to work to make conditions in Black communities better. The same cannot be said for New Deal policies related to the housing crisis, which made it harder, not easier, for African Americans to purchase homes and build wealth.

The Depression created chaos in the housing market. Millions faced eviction. Because unemployed homeowners couldn't afford to pay their mortgages, banks couldn't afford to make new loans, and cities couldn't collect property taxes to fund municipal services, including relief programs.

To resuscitate the economy, the administration stimulated the housing sector. To help homeowners, Roosevelt signed the Home Owners' Loan Act, which provided emergency relief to homeowners, including opportunities to refinance mortgages at lower interest rates and for longer terms, for up to 25 years instead of 5 to 10.

To help the banking industry, the federal government incentivized lending by guaranteeing home mortgages, essentially making them risk-free. Banks responded by issuing loans again, this time with more favorable terms.

These radical reforms solved the housing crisis. They also greatly expanded homeownership. But the practical application of the new housing policies had a devastating impact on Black communities because they reinforced racially segregated housing patterns.

The Home Owners' Loan Corporation issued guidance on mortgage lending by surveying neighborhoods in every metropolitan area and rating their risk either A, B, C, or D, with A meaning "best" and D meaning "hazardous." The key factor in receiving an A rating was white racial homogeneity. And the leading factor for receiving a D rating was Black racial homogeneity. If a neighborhood was white, the government would buy the loan from the lender—the loan was guaranteed. But if the neighborhood

was all Black, the government would not buy the loan. Such neighborhoods were outlined on survey maps in red ink, hence the term *redlining*.

Faced with assuming all the risk, banks opted not to issue loans to residents of Black communities. This institutional preference for whiteness informed decision-making in the housing industry for decades, and it trapped African Americans in dilapidated and deteriorating urban housing that had very little wealth-generating capacity.

Lecture 11

World War II: Fighting at Home and Abroad

War was coming. Germany had stormed Poland. Japan had attacked China. And Italy had invaded Ethiopia. By the start of 1941, the question was no longer if the United States should enter World War II but rather when it would do so.

Buildup

On January 6, 1941, President Franklin Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress and made the case for war. Although Roosevelt did not plan on sending troops overseas without the blessing of the American people, he had already set the wheels of war in motion. The year before, he had persuaded Congress to institute a military draft, requiring men between ages 21 and 35 to register for service.

In 1938, Roosevelt began guiding the hand of industry, shifting the focus of American manufacturing from the production of consumer goods to the production of war materials. Eventually, instead of cars, auto assembly lines produced tanks, guns, and airplane engines.

For many manufacturers, the decision to shift production toward defense was an easy one. The Great Depression had crushed consumer demand, decimating profits. By comparison, military demand was insatiable.

The Catch

To meet the demands of the American war machine, manufacturers started hiring. But there was a catch. To get a job, you had to be white. Defense contractors throughout the country refused to hire African Americans.

No one understood the peril that this kind of racial discrimination put African Americans in better than Black labor activist A. Philip Randolph. He recognized immediately that Black workers were in serious jeopardy of having the ensuing economic recovery pass them by.

Randolph threatened a massive civil disobedience campaign designed to bring the federal government to a grinding halt if the president didn't stop defense contractors from discriminating against Black workers. And Randolph didn't issue idle threats.

Randolph's Activities

Randolph was born in Crescent City, Florida, in 1889, but he grew up 80 miles to the north, in Jacksonville. Later in life, he made his way to New York City, arriving in 1911. He became deeply engaged in Black liberation debates. He gravitated toward socialism. Starting in 1917, he used the pages of *The Messenger* magazine, which he cofounded, to give voice to his ideas.

A. Philip Randolph

Randolph's belief in the centrality of labor to Black liberation led him to accept an invitation from a group of Pullman porters to lead their nascent union. Called the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, the organization sought to gain collective bargaining rights from the Pullman Company, which monopolized railroad car manufacturing and passenger train transportation.

Randolph took the helm of the organization in 1925. He spent some time building support for the union among Black porters and members of the broader Black community. Eventually, in 1937, the Pullman Company finally recognized the group.

Walter White

Randolph had built the largest African American union in the country. This earned him a seat at the table when a delegation of Black leaders, including the NAACP's Walter White and the National Urban League's T. Arnold Hill, met with President Roosevelt in September 1940 to lobby for nondiscrimination in defense hiring and for the desegregation of the military.

Roosevelt balked at the suggestions. He refused to interfere with the hiring practices of defense contractors or the Jim Crow policies of the armed forces. Randolph walked away from the meeting deeply disappointed. He also walked away with an idea for a massive march.

Planning the March

On January 25, 1941, just three weeks after Roosevelt addressed the aforementioned joint session of Congress, Randolph called on African Americans to march on Washington DC. He asked them to gather at the Capitol on July 1, 1941, to protest racial discrimination in the defense industries and segregation in the military.

This was a bold call for nonviolent civil disobedience. The demonstrators would register their frustration with racial discrimination by disrupting government. If Black people could not work, neither would federal officials.

Randolph envisioned his march on Washington as an all-Black affair. He also saw it as a grassroots effort. It would be organized locally, from the bottom up rather than the top down. National organizations like the NAACP could assist, but they could not lead. The march would revolve around working-class Black people, the group impacted the most by racial discrimination in defense manufacturing.

Randolph's plan drew skepticism from national civil rights leaders, including the NAACP's Walter White, as well as from a handful of Black newspapers. The proposal also drew criticism from supporters of the president. Randolph was undeterred by the skepticism.

In the weeks following the announcement, Randolph promoted the march in the *Black Worker*, the official organ of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and published articles and editorials in Black newspapers. He also traveled to Black communities across the country, connecting with local activists.

Chapters supporting the march soon sprang up in cities across the country. They coordinated fundraising, distributed promotional materials, and arranged for transportation to Washington DC.

By early June, Randolph speculated that as many as 100,000 African Americans would participate in the protest. The change reflected what was happening on the ground in cities across the country. As July 1 neared, local chapters held massive pre-march rallies; for instance, 20,000 people showed up for a rally in Chicago, while 23,000 people attended one in New York.

The size of these rallies unnerved President Roosevelt. He wanted to ignore the proposed protest, but he couldn't for much longer. For months, civil rights leaders had been asking for an audience with the president to discuss discrimination in defense industries. Each request had been denied.

But in mid-June, Roosevelt sent his top emissary to Black America, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, to parlay with Randolph. He hoped she would be able to persuade him to cancel the march, but Randolph was unpersuadable.

Soon afterward, the president invited Randolph to meet with him. He offered the labor leader personal assurances that African Americans would be treated better in defense industries and in the military. But that wasn't enough to

convince Randolph to call off the march. Randolph wanted something far more concrete than a promise; he wanted an executive order banning employment discrimination and segregation in the military.

Roosevelt took integrating the military off the table. He didn't think it prudent to desegregate the armed forces while the nation prepared for war. Randolph disagreed.

The president was willing to issue an executive order forbidding racial discrimination in defense industries. Randolph reviewed several drafts of the order. He liked what he read and announced on the radio that he was postponing the march.

Executive Order 8802

Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 on June 25, 1941. It affirmed

> "that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin."

The order also said that employers and unions had a duty to "provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries." To ensure compliance, the order established the Fair Employment Practices Committee and charged it with investigating complaints of discrimination and redressing grievances.

Executive Order 8802 was a huge win for African Americans. The number of Black workers in defense industries rose from just 3% in 1942 to 8% in 1945.

African American Military Service

Some 1.2 million African Americans served in the American military during World War II. Because the military remained rigidly segregated, their experience was remarkably similar to that of African American soldiers during World War I. Most were assigned to noncombat units and made to do support work such as building roads and landing strips, constructing barracks, and preparing meals.

They also had to load and unload supplies, including munitions, which was especially dangerous. On July 17, 1944, in Port Chicago, California, two ships being loaded with live munitions exploded, killing more than 200 Black sailors. When some of the survivors refused to resume work under the same hazardous conditions at a nearby munitions depot, 50 were convicted of mutiny and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Civil rights organizations tried to end this kind of mistreatment by pushing for as much equality as they could. This included commissioning Black officers for Black units. These efforts led to the creation of the 332nd Fighter Group of the Army Air Corps—the famed Tuskegee Airmen.

Nearly 1,000 Black pilots graduated from the segregated flight training school at Tuskegee Army Airfield in Tuskegee, Alabama. Between 1942 and 1945, they flew more than 1,500 missions and participated in more than 15,000 combat sorties. Known as the Red Tails because of the distinctive red color they painted the tails of their planes, Tuskegee Airmen notched 112 aerial kills. They also

performed bomber escort duty with such proficiency that all-white bomber crews frequently requested that they fly cover for them.

Conclusion

Black valor wasn't enough to change Jim Crow policies and practices during the war, either within the military or civilian life. In fact, it unnerved segregationists because it undermined white supremacy. Their core belief shaken, racists acted out. In June 1943, Detroit police went on a two-day rampage, killing 17 African Americans.

The stubborn persistence of racial discrimination led the *Pittsburgh Courier*, Black America's most widely read newspaper, to launch the Double V campaign, calling for victory overseas against fascism and victory at home against racism. A. Philip Randolph did his part for by establishing the March on Washington Movement, an umbrella organization for associated chapters that monitored the work of the Fair Employment Practices Committee.

The March on Washington Movement continued organizing massive rallies. They also applied pressure to Northern state legislatures to establish state-level Fair Employment Practices Committees; New York was the first to do so.

But the federal FEPC was a tremendous disappointment. It was underfunded and understaffed. Its committee members also tended to be uninterested in investigating complaints. And worst of all, it lacked enforcement power. It couldn't do much to violators, even if it wanted to.

Segregationists monitored the work of the FEPC as well, and they didn't like what they saw. Any effort to promote racial equality was a threat to white supremacy. Southern Democrats blocked attempts to convert Executive Order 8802 into federal law, effectively killing the FEPC in 1946.

When the FEPC disappeared, so too did the March on Washington Movement. But the energy that motivated Randolph and the tens of thousands of working-class African Americans who rallied to his call remained. In the years ahead, they would summon this energy for new protests.

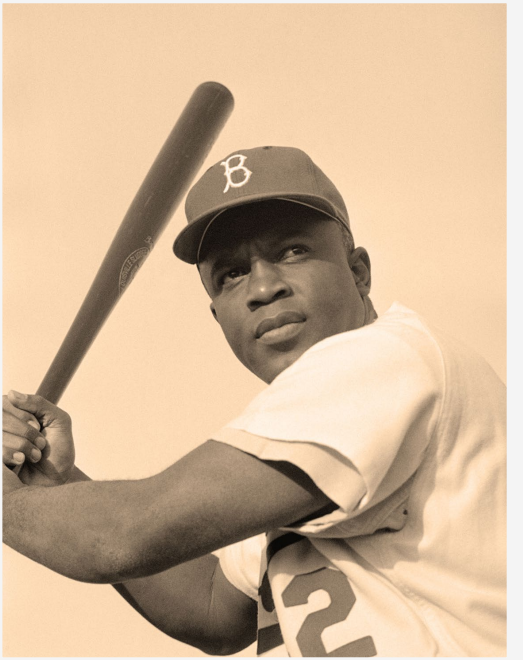
Lecture 12

Black Athletes Break Barriers

Major League Baseball player Jackie Robinson joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, making him the first African American to play in the white professional league in the 20th century. Robinson believed in paving the way for others. He did that on the Dodgers, helping contemporaries Don Newcombe and Roy Campanella adjust to and succeed in the league. He also advocated vociferously for racial equality on and off the playing field. And he wasn't the only Black athlete to do so. Boldness and determination were characteristics shared by many Black athletes of the late Jim Crow era.

The Robinsons

On January 31, 1919, in Cairo, Georgia, Mallie Robinson and her husband Jerry welcomed their fifth child, Jack Roosevelt Robinson (Jackie), into the world. Life was difficult for the Robinsons. They worked for next to nothing on the Jim Sasser farm. Matters became even more challenging for Mallie when Jerry abandoned the family. Jackie was only one.



Jackie Robinson

Wanting more out of life, Mallie packed her meager belongings, gathered her children, and fled to Pasadena, California, joining a half brother who had settled there some years earlier. Mallie could only find sporadic work as a domestic. Somehow, she managed to scrape together enough to purchase a four-bedroom cottage with a brick front porch.

To buy the house, she had to purchase it from a Black man who had been able to pass as white in order to buy it from its previous white owner. Mallie's new neighbors were not happy and threatened the family, but Mallie was unflinching. The Robinsons stayed put and turned that house into a home.

In Pasadena, young Jackie and his friends faced racism constantly. Meanwhile, Jack's brother Mack, who was five years his senior, was making a name for himself as a skilled track runner. In 1936, he won a spot on the national team for the Olympics.

The 1936 Olympics

The 1936 Olympics were to be held in Berlin, Germany. But there was a problem: the racist policies of the Nazi regime. The United States Olympic Committee debated boycotting the games but decided against it.

This did not resolve the issue for African Americans, who faced the dual dilemma of competing in an Olympics hosted by a blatantly racist nation for a blatantly racist nation. In the end, Mack and 17 other Black athletes made the 10-day voyage across the Atlantic aboard a US Olympic Committee steamer. They traveled in Jim Crow accommodations.

The *Pittsburgh Courier* dubbed the US National Team's African American athletes the Black Eagles. Black America expected them to soar, and that's exactly what they did, especially in track and field. And in the 200-meter final, Mack Robinson brought home the silver medal, finishing just behind teammate Jesse Owens, who also claimed gold in the 100-meter race, the long jump, and the 4-by-100 relay.

Other African Americans found success, too. Overall, African Americans won 14 medals, including 8 golds, comprising a third of the total haul for the US team. But not every Black athlete who traveled to Berlin got a chance. US coaches didn't allow sprinter Louise Stokes to compete, solely because she was Black. As fast as she was, she could not outrun Jim Crow.

Jesse Owens

And despite the Black Olympians' remarkable accomplishments, next to nothing changed at home. Jesse Owens, the games' most decorated athlete, was feted with a ticker-tape parade, but after the confetti settled, he struggled to find gainful employment.

Joe Louis and Ora Belle Washington

Generally, Black Olympians could not turn pro and make a living. Boxers were a notable exception. Whether Olympians or not, pugilists could earn a paycheck, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, boxing's golden age.

During this era, the heavyweight champion was considered the world's greatest athlete. Joe Louis, arguably the best boxer of all time, fought during this time. Louis's manager John Roxborough, a former Black athlete himself, nurtured Louis's professional career. He promoted Louis as a Black boxer who white people could cheer for. To protect this persona, he counseled Louis never to be photographed with a white woman.

Joe Louis

After turning pro in 1934, Louis won 24 straight fights, but in 1936, he fell to Germany's Max Schmeling, the pride of the Nazis. Two years later, in a rematch, Lewis defeated Schmeling. Already an American champion, Louis instantly became an American hero.

One of the best Black female athletes, Ora Belle Washington, also played during this time. Washington dominated the Black tennis circuit for much of the 1930s. Since the United States Tennis Association (USTA) had banned African Americans from playing in its tournaments, African Americans organized the American Tennis Association.

The ATA, the first Black professional sports organization, started in 1916. Washington won its national championship in 1925 and then held it from 1929 through 1936. Washington was also a successful basketball player. Washington dominated another court as well—the basketball court. In the 1930s, she was the starting center for the Philadelphia Tribunes, one of the greatest women's basketball teams of all time.

Financial Difficulties and Military Service

During her playing days, Washington received little recognition outside of women's hoops circles, and even less pay. To make ends meet, she worked as a domestic.

Financial concerns were never far from Jackie Robinson's mind, either. After high school, he enrolled at nearby Pasadena Junior College so he could help his mother pay bills. But these real-life worries did not seem to impact his

play. From 1937 to 1939, he excelled in football, basketball, baseball, and track, garnering the attention of the University of California, Los Angeles.

Robinson enrolled in UCLA in 1939 and continued to excel on the playing field. However, financial hardship forced Robinson to leave school in the spring of 1941—the second semester of his senior year—to earn a paycheck playing professional football. That fall, he signed a contract to play with the semipro Honolulu Bears in Hawaii. When his season ended on December 5, 1941, he left Hawaii. Two days later, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Four months later, Robinson was inducted into the army.

The army sent Robinson to a cavalry unit at Fort Riley, Kansas. There he met Joe Louis, who had enlisted in 1942. The two shared a passion for competition and a love of golf; they became fast friends.

Louis fought hundreds of exhibitions in front of the troops, using his boxing skills and celebrity to boost morale. But that didn't mean he was blind to the injustices that African Americans faced. Later, in 1946, he said in a speech to the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, "I hate seeing people kept down because they are colored." He eventually went on to say,

> "Lots of people think that I'm doing all right as a fighter and that I should stick to my business. They mean all right, but they don't understand that fighting prejudice, disease, and second-class citizenship is my business too."

Robinson wanted to become an officer, but the army refused to process his application. Louis intervened on his behalf, reaching out to personal contacts in Washington DC. On January 28, 1943, the army commissioned Robinson as a second lieutenant.

Robinson believed deeply in military service, but he soured on the army after facing a bogus court-martial for drunken and disorderly conduct. The charges stemmed from his refusal to move to the back of a military bus driving on military property. Although Robinson was acquitted of the trumped-up charges, he wanted out of the military. In the fall of 1944, he received an honorable discharge.

Robinson Returns to Athletics

In need of a job, Robinson turned to professional sports. Although he had not played organized baseball in five years, he tried out for the Kansas City Monarchs of the Negro American League, one of the best Black ball clubs around. The Monarchs signed him to a contract worth $400 a month. The Negro Leagues were at their peak in the 1940s. As many as 3 million fans attended Negro League games in 1945.

Robinson played in 47 games for the Monarchs, batting .387. The pay was OK, but travel—complicated by Jim Crow laws and customs—was arduous. The Brooklyn Dodgers reached out after the 1945 season and offered him a minor league contract with their Montreal affiliate worth $600 a month, along with a $3,500 signing bonus. He took the opportunity. His first telephone call after signing the contract was to his fiancée of five years, Rachel Isum. They now had enough money for the wedding of her dreams.

Black sportswriters like the *Pittsburgh Courier*'s Wendell Smith had been clamoring for Major League baseball to desegregate for years. They piqued the interest of Dodgers general manager Branch Rickey. He was a shrewd baseball mind who wasn't going to let a 50-year-old gentleman's agreement among white baseball owners to keep African Americans out of the game keep him from fielding the best possible team—and increasing gate receipts along the way. In Robinson, he saw the right combination of athleticism, character, and mental toughness to make his scheme work.

He was right, but it wasn't easy. Racist taunts from white spectators, opposition from white teammates, spikes-high slides by opponents, headhunting by pitchers, and regular death threats began the moment Robinson arrived in Daytona Beach, Florida, for spring training in 1946. The racist treatment continued through his first season in Brooklyn, which began when he ran onto the diamond at Ebbets Field on April 15, 1947.

Conclusion

As Robinson's professional sports career was beginning, Joe Louis's was ending. After the war, he fought just four more times before retiring in 1949. Over 12 years, he had successfully defended his heavyweight title 25 times, the most ever by a titleholder. He returned to the ring a few years later, but Louis was well past his prime. At this point, he wasn't the Louis that people remembered—the midcentury American icon who had landed the first blow against Hitler by knocking out Max Schmeling.

At the end of the 1956 season, the Dodgers announced that they were moving to Los Angeles, and Robinson announced that he was retiring from baseball. He was only 38 years old, but a decade of big-league ball, the grind of the game, and the racism that he encountered along the way had taken its toll on his body and spirit, impacting his ability to perform at the high level he expected.

Robinson was not content to live in the shadow of his stardom, though. Baseball had been his profession, and he had excelled, but racial justice was his passion, and there was a tremendous amount of work that still needed to be done.

Robinson's retirement signaled the beginning of an important new phase of his life. This phase centered on securing freedom rights for African Americans, especially economic opportunities and political participation.

Questions

Answers on page 143

Lecture 1

1. What compelled enslaved African Americans to work for their enslavers?
2. Name the community that freed African Americans established on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina that served as a rehearsal for Reconstruction.
3. What is the combination of civil and human rights that emancipated African Americans identified as the crux of freedom?

Lecture 2

1. What did African Americans, Northern whites, and Southern whites believe should be the core objectives of Reconstruction?
2. Why did Radical Republicans insist that freed people remain on the plantations of their enslavement and sign annual labor contracts with their former enslavers?
3. Why did African Americans enter sharecropping arrangements?
4. What made sharecropping so exploitative?
5. What three amendments to the US Constitution are considered the Reconstruction amendments?

Lecture 3

1. What did the United States Supreme Court say about the constitutionality of Jim Crow laws in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896?

2 Southern whites approached race relations at the start of the 20th century with what kind of mentality?

3 What was the primary purpose of segregation?

4 What was it called when Black men, women, and children were arrested on bogus charges, convicted by corrupt justices-of-the-peace, and then sold as laborers to large landowners or corporations?

Lecture 4

1 How did "Lift Every Voice and Sing" spread beyond Jacksonville, Florida?

2 How did African Americans respond to segregation laws in public transportation in cities like Richmond, Virginia?

3 What heinous crime did Black journalists like Ida B. Wells and John Mitchell Jr. crusade to end?

4 In 1879, Benjamin "Pap" Singleton led African Americans out of the Deep South to settle in what state?

Lecture 5

1 The NAACP's 1917 Negro Silent Protest Parade in New York City marked the first time African Americans engaged in what kind of protest?

2 Between 1886 and 1917, the NAACP found that 2,867 African Americans had been lynched in America. How many white people did they find had been punished for these crimes?

3 What procedural mechanism did Southern Democrats use to block anti-lynching measures such as the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill?

4 In 1908, Jack Johnson became the first African American to claim what title?

Lecture 6

1. When World War I broke out, the NAACP's W. E. B. Du Bois wrote an editorial in *The Crisis* magazine calling on African Americans to do what?

2. What did the United States military do in response to 1917's so-called Houston mutiny in Texas?

3. How did Charles Hamilton Houston become a first lieutenant in the US Army?

4. During World War I, the 369th Infantry Regiment, the famed Harlem Hellfighters, distinguished themselves in combat by fighting alongside soldiers from what country?

Lecture 7

1. What was the name of the organization that Marcus Garvey led?

2. Why did Garveyism resonate with African Americans?

3. What did Garvey do to reach an audience beyond Harlem?

4. What group infiltrated the UNIA and succeeded in undermining Marcus Garvey and his movement?

Lecture 8

1. What prompted Claude McKay to pen his poetic call to action "If We Must Die"?

2. What city was the site of the worst racial violence during the summer of 1919?

3. What motivated millions of African Americans to migrate from the South to the North in the early 20th century?

4. What forms did racial discrimination take in Northern cities?

5 Generally speaking, how did African Americans respond to racial discrimination outside the South?

Lecture 9

1 In *Powell v. Alabama* (1932), a case born of the wrongful convictions of the Scottsboro Nine, what did the US Supreme Court say every defendant was entitled to have?

2 What did the NAACP's James Weldon Johnson identify as the primary cause of Black economic insecurity during the 1920s, which was only made worse by the Great Depression?

3 Ella Baker was among those who responded to the Great Depression by organizing what kind of organizations for African Americans?

Lecture 10

1 What core aspect of the Great Depression proved most devastating to African Americans?

2 The Hoover administration's laissez-faire approach to the Great Depression proved wholly inadequate, prompting African Americans to switch from what political party to what political party?

3 Why did Black tenant farmers have such a difficult time collecting federal farm subsidies that had been earmarked for them?

4 What drastic action did Black sharecroppers in the Missouri bootheel take to compel the Roosevelt administration to make good on its relief and recovery promises?

5 How did New Deal housing policies reinforce and perpetuate racially segregated housing?

Lecture 11

1 What ultimately lifted America out of the Great Depression?

2 What did President Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802 forbid?

3 Because the US military remained segregated during World War II, what kind of work were most Black soldiers made to do?

4 What impact did Black valor in the air, on land, and at sea have on the US military's Jim Crow policies during World War II?

5 The Double V campaign called for what two types of victory?

Lecture 12

1 What kinds of challenges did Black Olympic medal winners like Mack Robinson and Jesse Owens face once they returned to Jim Crow America?

2 Who said this? "Lots of people think that I'm doing all right as a fighter and that I should stick to my business. They mean all right, but they don't understand that fighting prejudice, disease, and second-class citizenship is my business too."

3 Why did Jackie Robinson, who believed deeply in military service, sour on the US Army?

4 Baseball was Jackie Robinson's profession. What was his passion?

Answers

Lecture 1

1. Fear
2. Mitchelville
3. Freedom rights

Lecture 2

1. For African Africans, it was securing their freedom rights. For Northern whites, it was jump-starting the Southern economy. And for Southern whites, it was recreating slavery by another name.
2. Radical Republicans also embraced white supremacy and did not believe that African Americans could work independently.
3. In theory, sharecropping was equitable, and because African Americans did not have money to purchase land of their own, exchanging their labor for access to land allowed them more day-to-day control over their lives and labor than other arrangements, such as working for daily wages.
4. Debt
5. The Thirteenth, which abolished slavery; the Fourteenth, which extended citizenship to African Americans; and the Fifteenth, which granted voting rights to African American men

Lecture 3

1. The court ruled that racial segregation was constitutional so long as it was "separate but equal."

2 An enslaver's mentality

3 To control Black labor by regulating Black behavior

4 Convict leasing

Lecture 4

1 Black college students from North Florida introduced it to glee clubs at the schools they attended, who then carried it the world over during their concert fundraising tours.

2 Streetcar boycotts

3 Lynching

4 Kansas

Lecture 5

1 A mass march

2 Zero

3 The filibuster

4 World heavyweight champion

Lecture 6

1 To forget their "special grievances" and "close ranks" with white Americans

2 It convened the largest court-martial in US history, which resulted in the immediate execution of 13 Black soldiers.

3 He received his officer's commission at the segregated Colored Officers Training Camp in Fort Des Moines, Iowa, which the military had opened in response to pressure from civil rights organizations such as the NAACP.

4 France

Lecture 7

1 The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)

2 It offered the Black masses a blueprint for enjoying their freedom rights, spoke to their strongly held belief in Black nationalism, and reflected Black emigration sentiment.

3 He started the *Negro World*, the official organ of the UNIA.

4 The Bureau of Investigation, the precursor to the FBI

Lecture 8

1 The racial violence of 1919, also known as the Red Summer

2 Chicago, Illinois

3 Lynching, disfranchisement, and segregation in the South played a role, as did the dim prospects of change. Better-paying industrial job opportunities in the North also motivated African Americans to leave.

4 Unequal pay, housing discrimination, school segregation, and police violence

5 They built up Black communities and supported thriving Black business districts.

Lecture 9

1. Competent legal representation
2. Job discrimination
3. Economic cooperatives

Lecture 10

1. Unemployment
2. From the Republican Party to the Democratic Party
3. White plantation owners refused to turn over the checks that were meant for them.
4. They established a tent city along two major highways.
5. They created an institutional preference for whiteness in mortgage lending.

Lecture 11

1. Federal investment in defense manufacturing, which created millions of industrial jobs
2. Racial discrimination by companies receiving defense contracts
3. Most Black soldiers were assigned to noncombat units and made to do support work.
4. None. The US military remained rigidly segregated.
5. Victory over fascism overseas and victory over racism at home.

Lecture 12

1. They faced racial discrimination and struggled to secure gainful employment.

2. Joe Louis

3. He soured on the army after facing a bogus court-martial for drunken and disorderly conduct.

4. Racial justice

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Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920*. 1994. The story of the Black club women who played a decisive role in Black liberation.

Kelley, Blair L. M. *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson*. 2010. Case studies on organized Black responses to the expansion of Jim Crow laws and customs.

Ortiz, Paul. *Emancipation Betrayed: The Hidden History of Black Organizing and White Violence in Florida from Reconstruction to the Bloody Election of 1920*. 2006. Argues convincingly that despite the real hardships that African Americans faced following the collapse of Reconstruction, they continued to find ways to participate in the political process.

Painter, Nell Irvin. *Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction*. 1992. The story of Benjamin "Pap" Singleton and the African Americans who migrated to Kansas to escape Jim Crow.

Wells, Ida B. *Crusade for Justice: The Autobiography of Ida B. Wells*. 2nd ed. 2020. The compelling autobiography of anti-lynching crusader Ida B. Wells.

Lecture 5

Cecelski, David S., Timothy B. Tyson, et al. *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy*. 1998. A history of the Wilmington Massacre, with a rich exploration of how it has been intentionally misremembered.

Gilmore, Glenda Elizabeth. *Gender and Jim Crow, Second Edition: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896–1920*. 2019. A nuanced examination of the role of Southern white women in making and maintaining the color line.

Lumpkins, Charles. *American Pogrom: The East St. Louis Race Riot and Black Politics*. 2008. A compelling investigation into the causes and consequences of one of the deadliest racial massacres in US history.

Moore, Louis. *I Fight for a Living: Boxing and the Battle for Black Manhood, 1880–1915*. 2017. An insightful examination of boxing and the color line at the turn of the 20th century.

Sullivan, Patricia. *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*. 2010. A detailed history of the formation and evolution of the nation's leading civil rights organization.

Ward, Geoffrey C. *Unforgivable Blackness: The Rise and Fall of Jack Johnson*. 2006. The definitive biography of Jack Johnson, the first Black heavyweight champion of the world.

Wood, Amy Louise. *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940*. 2011. Explains how lynching was not about seeking justice, but rather about establishing white supremacy.

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Lentz-Smith, Adriane. *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I*. 2011. Charts the experiences of African Americans during the war while arguing for the heightened significance of that moment in US history.

Williams, Chad L. *Torchbearers of Democracy: African American Soldiers in the World War I Era*. 2013. Looks closely at the experiences of Black soldiers at home and abroad.

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Blain, Keisha N. *Set the World on Fire: Black Nationalist Women and the Global Struggle for Freedom*. 2019. Changes the usual male-dominated narrative of the history of Black nationalism by centering on Black female nationalist theoreticians and practitioners.

Martin, Tony. *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggle of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association*. 2020. A straightforward history of Marcus Garvey's UNIA.

Rolinson, Mary G. *Grassroots Garveyism: The Universal Negro Improvement Association in the Rural South, 1920–1927*. 2007. A rich exploration of Garveyism as practiced by everyday Black people in rural communities across the South.

Lecture 8

Boyle, Kevin. *Arc of Justice: A Saga of Race, Civil Rights, and Murder in the Jazz Age*. 2005. The dramatic story of Ossian Sweet and residential segregation in Detroit.

Gregory, James N. *The Southern Diaspora: How the Great Migrations of Black and White Southerners Transformed America*. 2005. A detailed look at the movement of Americans from the rural South to the urban North.

Krugler, David F. *1919, The Year of Racial Violence: How African Americans Fought Back*. 2014. Pieces together the often-overlooked stories of the racial violence that defined the Red Summer.

Lewis, David Levering. *When Harlem Was In Vogue*. 1997. Captures the creativity and complexity of the Harlem Renaissance.

Makalani, Minkah. *In the Cause of Freedom: Radical Black Internationalism from Harlem to London, 1917–1939*. 2014. Pulls the curtain back on the Black radical tradition.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. 2010. Reveals everyday Black people who fled the Jim Crow South in search of better opportunities in the North.

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Carter, Dan T. *Scottsboro: A Tragedy of the American South Revised*. 2007. A careful telling of the people and events at the heart of the Scottsboro case.

Hughes, Langston. *Scottsboro Limited, Four Poems and a Play in Verse; With Illustrations by Prentiss Taylor.* 1932. Powerful poetry that captures African Americans' anger and frustration with the criminal justice system.

Kelley, Robin D. G. *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists during the Great Depression*. 1990. Takes everyday Black people, including dispossessed farmers and displaced agricultural workers, seriously as political thinkers and actors.

McNeil, Genna Rae. *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. 1984. The story of Charles Hamilton Houston, who played a huge role in dismantling Jim Crow.

Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. 2005. A political and intellectual biography of veteran grassroots organizer Ella Baker.

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Berrey, Stephen A. *The Jim Crow Routine: Everyday Performances of Race, Civil Rights, and Segregation in Mississippi*. 2015. A nuanced analysis of how people experienced the color line during the Jim Crow era.

Purnell, Brian, and Jeanne Theoharis, et al. *The Strange Careers of the Jim Crow North: Segregation and Struggle Outside of the South*. 2019. An informative exploration of segregation outside the South.

Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. 2018. A hard look at the leading role federal, state, and local governments played in segregating communities outside of the South.

Sklaroff, Lauren Rebecca. *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era*. 2009. A unique look at the New Deal through the prism of Black cultural production made possible by federal art and work programs.

Trotter, Joe William, Jr. *From a Raw Deal to a New Deal: African Americans 1929–1945*. 1996. A thoughtful overview of the Black experience during the New Deal era.

Lecture 11

Bates, Beth Tompkins. *Pullman Porters and the Rise of Protest Politics in Black America, 1925–1945*. 2003. Retrieves the Pullman porters from the margins of history and situates them at the center of the burgeoning civil rights movement.

Bynum, Cornelius L. *A. Philip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights*. 2010. A thorough investigation of the life and times of civil rights leader and labor activist A. Philip Randolph.

Delmont, Matthew F. *Half American: The Epic Story of African Americans Fighting World War II at Home and Abroad*. 2022. A compelling history of African Americans' struggle to defeat Nazism in Europe and racism in America.

Moye, J. Todd. *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II*. 2010. The unvarnished truth about the Black experience in the military during World War II based on hundreds of interviews with the famed Tuskegee Airmen.

Lecture 12

Lanctot, Neil. *Negro League Baseball: The Rise and Ruin of a Black Institution*. 2008. A well-researched history of the Negro Leagues.

Martin, Charles. *Benching Jim Crow: The Rise and Fall of the Color Line in Southern College Sports, 1890–1980*. 2005. Explores why racial exclusion became accepted practice on the Southern gridiron, how it evolved, and how it eventually came undone.

Moore, Louis. *We Will Win the Day: The Civil Rights Movement, the Black Athlete, and the Quest for Equality*. 2017. An invaluable history of the intersection of race, sports, and the Black freedom struggle.

Rampersad, Arnold. *Jackie Robinson: A Biography*. 1998. The definitive biography of baseball legend Jackie Robinson.

Robinson, Rachel, and Lee Daniels. *Jackie Robinson: An Intimate Portrait*. 1996. A moving mediation by Rachel Isum Robinson on her husband Jackie Robinson and their life together.

Schapp, Jeremy. *Triumph: The Untold Story of Jesse Owens and Hitler's Olympics*. 2008. A wonderfully written history of track sensation Jesse Owens and the 1936 Olympics.

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