

The rise of african- americans from 1865 to 2012

[Politics](#), [Civil Rights](#)



After the Civil War African-American expected to have their freedom, but this was not really the case. Even though the approval of the 13th Amendment freed them from their Southern masters, they were still far from being free. The 13th amendment to the United States Constitution provides that " Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction" (ourdocuments. gov).

After surviving some of the most brutal injustices and dehumanization in American history, the African-American people have grown to be a powerful force, overcoming segregation, discrimination and isolation, and have worked toward the equality and civil rights they now enjoy. Before the Civil War, African-Americans had dreams of freedom. After the Civil War they thought those dreams would come true. But in reality things got worse for them. The 14th Amendment secured equal rights, citizenship, due process of law, and equal protections to all former slaves. Blacks had gained control of their own destiny.

Now they needed a way to support themselves. But this was no easy task, jobs for colored people were hard to find and discrimination and segregation was high. Nothing showed this more clearly than the " Jim Crow" laws. Beginning in the 1880s, the term " Jim Crow" was widely used to describe practices, laws or institutions that arose from the physical separation of white and black people. These laws were created to offer " separate but equal" treatment of blacks and whites. In reality Jim Crow Laws condemned black citizens to unfair treatment and substandard facilities.

Public facilities such as hotels and restaurants as well as schools were all under Jim Crow Laws. In Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) the "separate but equal" standard set by the Supreme Court gave ample judicial support to segregation. In 1892, Homer Plessy refused to sit in a car for blacks. He was immediately arrested. This case went to the Supreme Court, where it was deemed to be that a state law that proposed that a legal distinction regarding the two races was not inconsistent with the 13th Amendment. Because of these Jim Crow Laws African-Americans were subjected to too much segregation and discrimination.

In order to keep them under subjection and "prevent political rebellion and prevent blacks from wielding the balance of power in close elections, southern Democrats appealed to white solidarity to defeat the Populists, whipped up anti-Negro sentiment, disfranchised African Americans, and imposed strict by law segregation" (Lawson, no date). The Populists were a third-party uprising that threatened the Democratic rule over the South. To make life harder for blacks nearly all southern black men lost their right to vote through measures such as poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, and the white primary.

All of these measures were aimed at preventing blacks from exercising their right to vote. The grandfather clause was peculiarly aimed at blacks because it stated that anyone having the right to vote before 1866 or 1867 or their lineal descendants would be exempt from educational, property, or tax requirements. Since former slaves did not get the right to vote until the 15th amendment was passed, this clause excluded them. The U. S. Supreme Court declared the grandfather clauses unconstitutional in 1915, because

they violated the equal voting rights guaranteed by the Fifteenth Amendment.

While the southern states were very anti-negro, the northern states were a little more lenient. Most northern white people and black people lived in different neighborhoods and attended different schools. This segregation resulted from African Americans residing in distinctive neighborhoods, because of low incomes well as wanting to live near other African Americans. It also caused them to be isolated within the cities and towns they lived in. Many blacks separated themselves not as a matter of choice or custom. Landlords were not fond of renting to black people and often The Rise of African- Americans turned them away. Realtors directed blacks away from white neighborhoods. Often municipal ordinances kept blacks out of white areas. Blacks were prevented from moving freely from town to town. They also could not be caught out at night without an explicit reason. Organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan, The White Brotherhood, the Red Shirts, and Knights of the White Camelia generated fear and oppression within the black community. " Klan members burned black homes, schools and churches as a reminder that blacks should not challenge white supremacy (POWELL, 2008, Mar 09).

These organizations prevented Blacks from voting. Because state laws made it illegal for Blacks to own gun, blacks had no way to defend themselves. Klan members tended gang up on their victims. Because of the Ku Klux Klan and others like them, African Americans feared for their lives on a daily bases. In 1871 Congress passed the Force Bill, giving the federal government the power to prosecute the Klan. Because of local law enforcement, very few

Klansmen were punished. This type of harassment did not end with World War I or World War II. Many African Americans moved to cities work in defense industries.

They often faced violence and discrimination. The president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, A. Philip Randolph, and other black leaders, met with Eleanor Roosevelt and members of the President's cabinet to put a stop to the harassment. After this meeting Roosevelt responded to the black leaders and issued Executive Order 8802, which declared, " There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries and in Government, because of race, creed, color, or national origin" (ourdocuments.gov). Approximately 1 million African Americans served in World War II.

Here again segregation, discrimination and isolation was the normal procedure. Most of the African Americans who went to war were isolated from the white soldiers. " Many blacks were assigned to work in areas of manual labor. While a minority was put in combat situations, they were poorly trained and underequipped to fight" (Bowles, 2011). The The Rise of African- Americans Black soldiers were placed in separate units under a white leader. Many African Americans used the war as a means to make a stand for their civil rights. On Feb. 1, 1946 Connecticut Gov.

Raymond Baldwin said, " In this war, as in others, enemy bullets did not single out any certain race or faith. Neither was the suffering of any man diminished because he was of one particular race or faith" (COCKERHAM & Courant, 1992, Sep 28). But World War II did, in fact, change the way African Americans were treated, although it would that many more years for new

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laws to stop the segregation, discrimination and isolation of blacks. There were many African Americans who worked hard to end their isolation through legislation, protest, and contributions to society. Booker T. Washington was one of these men.

Mr. Washington was an ex-slave. He believed black men could achieve a middle class status by getting an education. He worked to increase black colleges that were built during the Reconstruction. He established the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. But Washington was a conservative. "His philosophy was conservative because he advocated career paths that led African Americans to agricultural and industrial trades, while at the same time he urged them to adopt white, middle-class standards to overcome racism" (Bowles, 2011). Another African American who helped pave the way to freedom for Blacks was W. E. B. Du Bois.

Du Bois was Harvard's first black PhD. "In 1903, he published "The Souls of Black Folk", in which he openly criticized Washington's encouragement of segregation and plan of emulating middle-class white society" (Bowles, 2011). Du Bois believed African Americans should fight for their civil rights and not wait for someone else to do it for them. He also believed that a "talented tenth" of Blacks needed to get an education and seek the highest professions available. Du Bois felt this was the only way blacks could overcome the segregation, discrimination and isolation they had to live with.

The Rise of African- Americans

The 1950s brought many changes to the African American people. Discrimination was still a big issue. Historian Harvard Sitkoff wrote, "Nourished by anger, revolutions are born of hope" (Bowles, 2011). Anger and

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hope often do not mix but, for Blacks in America in the 50s and 60s that is exactly what happen. In the Plessy v. Ferguson case (1896) the Supreme Court ruled that “ separate but equal” was constitutional. Oliver Brown contested this ruling saying it was unlawful for his daughter to have to walk a number of miles to attend an all-black school when an all-white school was only three blocks away.

During this time the Supreme Court had many discrimination cases to rule on, they were all rolled into one case, the Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. In 1954 the Supreme Court made a ruling on the Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas. In this ruling the High Court said “ We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘ separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” (Bowles, 2011). At first this seemed like a huge step forward for African Americans, and it was, but there were many draw backs too.

The idea of intergraded schools did not go well with some people. Orval Faubus, the governor of Arkansas refused to follow the Supreme Court Order to allow Black students into an all-white school. Governor Faubus had a sign posted that stated; “ Governor Faubus has placed this school off limits to Negroes”. After this sign appeared President Eisenhower sent 1, 000 paratroopers from the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock to ensure that the Little Rock Nine (the first nine black students in the all-white high school) were allowed to attend Central High School.

These nine students faced many frustrations, isolation, and actual danger both inside and outside of Central High School. “ Despite the efforts of hardcore, local segregationists and Faubus’ dramatic decision to close the

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city's schools during the 1958-59 school year, three members of the Little Rock Nine went on to graduate from Central" The Rise of African- Americans (Wallach, 2004). The hardship these nine students faced was to continue for the African American population. The 60s brought about more racial tension as Black people stood their ground against discrimination and segregation.

Often the people that made the biggest change were little known. Rosa Parks was one of these people. Mrs. Parks became a legend to the Black community when she refused to give her seat to a white man. " Through a single, small act of civil disobedience, Parks became a catalyst for a campaign that would change the nation for the better" (Barlow, 2005). This move sparked the famous Montgomery bus boycott that was organized by another soon to be famous person, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Kings involvement in the Civil Rights Movement made him an icon. King idea was to make a statement using a non-violent approach. Following closely with the nonviolent philosophy of Gandhi (the leader of India during its movement for independence; he was assassinated in 1948), King and the Southern Black Church assumed the mantle of civil rights leadership" (Bowles, 2011). Sit-ins were often the choice of non-violent protest, though many Blacks were attacked by white people and many were arrested, the sit-ins went a long way in advancing the civil right cause. In 1968 Martin Luther King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee. He had planned to support the striking sanitation workers in Memphis.

His last words leave a haunting memory, " I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight, that we, as a people will get to the Promised Land" (Bowles, 2011). The sit-ins were not the only method use to move the

civil rights cause ahead, there were the Freedom Rides. The Freedom Rides were formed by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). The idea behind the freedom rides was to draw attention to the *Boynton v. Virginia* (1946), which stated that segregation in interstate vehicles was unconstitutional. The Rise of African-Americans Our intention," he said, " was to provoke the southern authorities into arresting us and thereby prod the Justice Department into enforcing the law of the land" (Bowles, 2011). These Freedom Riders were met with much resistance. At one point a bomb was thrown into the bus, everyone escaped, but many were hurt and bleeding. Ambulance drivers refused to take the hurt black people to the hospital. The local police made no arrest in the bombing. Like the sit-ins the Freedom Riders gain attention for the Civil Rights Movement. African- Americans moved one step closer to freedom.

Indifference began to creep into the minds of many former activists so the Seventies brought a mixture of results for the Civil Rights movement. During the 70s African- Americans saw a number of improvements especially in Atlanta, Georgia. In 1972, Andrew Young was elected to the 5th District House of Representatives. He was the first African-American to hold office since the Reconstruction. 1973 Atlanta saw its first Black Mayor when Maynard Jackson, Jr. was elected. These victories were hard won. By the 70s most of the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements had declined or just fallen apart.

The growth of rights for African Americans progressed slowly from 1980 to 2011. Civil conflicts persisted on a more silent note during the 1990s as educated African Americans were admitted into the middle class. As African

Americans moved from universities and colleges into the upper social classes, there were accusations by other African Americans that, they were forgetting their heritage and they were abandoning the civil rights cause. Those being accused of this included former Secretary of State Colin Powell and Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas.

Many of these African Americans worked persistently for civil rights for African Americans. In 2008, America saw its first black President, Barack Obama. "African Americans saw a chance to overcome centuries of injustice with a new voice in the White House and a compelling representation of multicultural America" (Bowles, 2011). President Obama promised to withdraw troops from Afghanistan while continuing the fight. Obama also promised the American people universal healthcare. In Obama's acceptance speech he said: "If there is anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy; tonight is your answer . . . because of what we did on this day, in this election, at this defining moment, change has come to America" Although many people were disappointed that these promises have not been upheld in the Obama administration, he was elected to four more years as President of the United States of America, on November 6, 2012.

After the Civil War the only thing that really changed for the African American people was the fact that they had no "master". Segregation, discrimination and isolation were a way of life. Set free by the 13th amendment, with citizenship guaranteed by the 14th amendment, black

males were given the right to vote by the 15th amendment. Although blacks were given the right to vote, organizations like the Ku Klux Klan saw to it that they did not vote by harassing, threatening, burning and killing them.

During both World Wars African American people was subjected to segregation, discrimination and isolation. “ Though many deserved it, no African American could receive the Medal of Honor, the highest military award for bravery” (Bowles, 2011). But with great Civil Right leaders like Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, blacks started to fight for their rights even more. The road to true freedom was a long one, many years and lives were spent gaining just a small amount of justice. But it has been a road that was well worth traveling. The Rise of African- Americans

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