

How supreme court and jim crow laws affected on black americans life

[Sociology](#), [Slavery](#)



It was the Supreme Court that was responsible for the worsening social and political condition of black Americans in the southern states in the period 1883 - 1900: how far do you agree w the statement

The Supreme Court can be seen as vital in the worsening of social and political conditions of black Americans in the Southern states between 1883-1900 as it made rulings that upheld Jim Crow laws which denied African Americans their civil and political rights. However, other factors, notably the federal government, lynching and violence and, most importantly, the Jim Crow laws themselves, can all be seen as more important in contributing to the worsening of black lives. The worsening social and political conditions that these factors are responsible for can be shown in race riots, decreasing suffrage and political representations, violence and segregation.

The collective decisions of the US Supreme Court in this period can be considered largely responsible for the worsening social and political conditions for black Americans as it was this that effectively upheld Jim Crow laws that denied black Americans their civil and political rights, and their rulings for individual cases effectively reversed many advances made in the 14th and 15th Amendment and civil rights Act. The Power of the Supreme Court to interpret the meaning of the Constitution meant it could decide whether actions of politicians were constitutional or not, and it did nothing to protect the 14th and 15th Amendments. The 1883 Civil Rights Cases declared the 1875 Civil Rights Act unconstitutional, and that the 14th Amendment did not outlaw individual acts of racial discrimination. This ruling was pivotal as it opened the gates for the development of Jim Crow laws. The

1896 Plessy V Ferguson case ruling of 'separate but equal' gave legal credence to segregation and the 1898 Mississippi V Williams gave the disenfranchisement of blacks its ultimate legal sanction and other states soon followed suit. It ensured large numbers of black people were denied the right to register to vote, thereby consolidating white domination of southern white governments and giving federal legality to state laws. Furthermore, the 1899 Cumming v Board of Education extended the principle of separate but equal to the realm of education, further aiding the prolonging of social inequality. Moreover, the Supreme Court justices in general tended to be conservative in the period 1883-1900 and were consistently ruling against the enforcement of civil rights. Overall, the Supreme Court was responsible for the perpetuation of segregation and discrimination laws and its rulings during 1883-1900 were seen as landmark decisions which allowed the consequent Jim Crow laws to worsen political and social conditions for black Americans.

Jim Crow laws passed by individual state governments mandated segregation of public schools, public places and public transportation effectively denying black Americans social equality and thus worsening their social conditions, as well as limiting their right to vote and consequently their political representation deteriorated along with their political conditions. De jure segregation came about because of rising white anxiety, for example over the rising proportion of black farmers in the Deep South (from 1880 3.8% to 1900 25%) . The 1887 Florida State Law declared black and white passengers had to occupy separate railway carriages with a \$500 fine for those

who violated this. This served as a daily reminder of black inequality and was extended to across a wide range of social and recreational areas from 1887 to 1900, including hospitals, hotels and other public places, such as Raleigh's Brookside Park. This segregation came about because of the changes in political control in southern states and the rise of populist white supremacist politicians such as Ben Tilman,. This lead to treatment that was usually inferior to those provided for Americans of European descent, systemizing a number of economic, education and social disadvantage. The Jim Crow laws introduced by State governments such as Mississippi in 1890 were also crucial in cuasing the widespread black disenfranchisement that occurred across the south denying black Americans their political and civil equality. One example of a law limiting suffrage is the Grandfather clause, initiated by Louisiana in 1898, which meant that a man could only vote if he could prove an ancestor had voted before reconstruction, meaning the majority of the black population was rendered ineligible to vote due to the previous years of slavery. The decline in black voters, for example in Louisiana black voters decreased from 130, 000 in 1896 to 5, 320 in 1900, ensuring a one party Democractic system which had no interest in improving neither social nor political conditions for black Americans. The Jim Crow laws thus affected social conditions for black Americans by legalizing segregation in many public and recreational areas leading to systemized discrimination, and worsened political conditions by significantly reducing black suffrage through various laws such as the poll tax, literacy qualifications and grandfather clauses. These were more directly responsible and to a greater extent than the Supreme Court decisions which simply maintained them.

Finally, Lynching and violence by southern whites were arguably more important than the supreme court in ensuring the worsening of social political conditions for black americans, as it decreased social conditions for many who were too scared to vote to speak out for fear of white backlash and thus decreased political representation due to the decline in black votes. The Wilmington Race Riot in 1898 is an example of backlash against bi-racial alliance that had begun to form. In the 1890s an average of 187 lynchings of black Americans took place every year, mainly in the South, averaging 3 per week. Those responsible for the crime were never brought to justice, suggesting widespread support and demonstrates how black americans had no legal protection to speak of. The violence intimidated many black people into not voting , meaning worsening political representation and conditions as well as perpetuating a social condition of extreme discrimination and constant fear undermining the daily lives of black Americans.

In conclusion, the Supreme Court was a critical factor in the worsening of social and political conditions of black Americans, however the Jim Crow laws that followed were more directly responsible. Lynching and violence intimidated black people into submitting to the view of white supremacists, scaring a lot of people into not speaking out and voting which inevitably prevented progress in their social and political condition, however this violence was only allowed (or, at least, ignored) because of the Jim Crow laws which legitimized segregation and prevented black people from political representation needed to fight the violence. Although it is arguable that these wouldn't have been made without the supreme court rulings that

confirmed the reversal of progress made pre-1883, the laws themselves would probably still have been passed without the Supreme Court and they had a more direct and widespread effects they had on black citizens and their social and political conditions, making them more responsible. The Jim Crow laws can be seen as more directly responsible for decreasing suffrage and legalized segregation and discrimination than the Supreme Court which only made decisions on individual cases of segregation and did not pass any laws that enforced segregation, but merely interpreted the law to suit the Jim Crow Laws and the states that passed them.