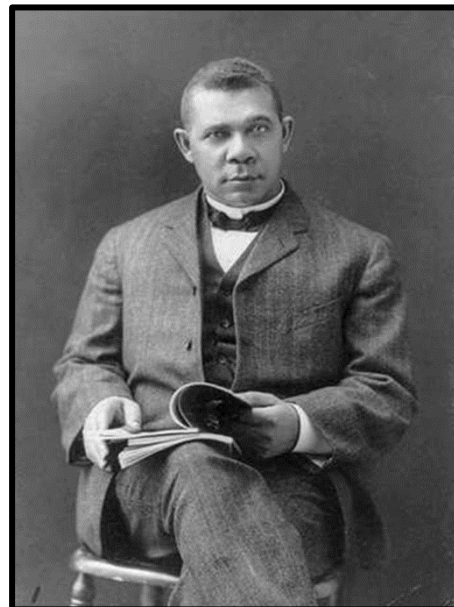


# Higher History: European and World

## USA, 1918 – 1968: Obstacles to the Achievement of Civil Rights: 1918 - 1941





## Issue 1: An Evaluation of the Obstacles to the Achievement of Civil Rights for Black People up to 1941

### A. Background

#### Learning Intentions:

- I will be able to explain the historical circumstances black Americans found themselves in by 1918
- I will be able to write an introduction

From the 16<sup>th</sup>, white Europeans abducted Africans from their homeland, transported them across the Atlantic Ocean, and sold them at auction to the highest bidder. By 1800, most black people in America were slaves who had been born in America. By 1860 there were about 4.5 million black people living in America, most of whom lived in the southern states and worked as slaves on the cotton and tobacco plantations.

In 1861, Civil War broke out. One of the main reason for the war was slavery: the North wanted to abolish it whilst the South wanted to maintain it. Despite the North winning the war and slavery being abolished, attitudes in the South towards black people were slow to change. The American Constitution was amended to ensure there was no legal basis for discriminating against black people:

- The **14th Amendment** to the Constitution (1868), and granted citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” which included former slaves recently freed.
- The **15th Amendment** to the Constitution (1870), established that the right to vote could not be denied based on race. African-American citizens, many of them former slaves, were now entitled to political equality.

However, the reality for black Americans was not equality but rather continued discrimination as Southern states found ways of controlling African-Americans through state laws and fear and terror. In the so-called ‘land of the free’ the 10.5 million black people living in the USA in 1920 suffered **discrimination** in the northern states and **segregation** in the South where they were denied equal rights and opportunities.

Although there was a growing demand for civil rights for black people, it was clear that between the 1920s – 1930s there were large obstacles blocking blacks achieving

civil rights: the **protection from discrimination** based on a person's physical or mental disability, gender, religion, race, age, or sexual orientation. This essay will focus on why it was so difficult for African-Americans to achieve civil rights between 1918 and 1941.

Black Americans faced **legal impediments** in the quest for civil rights. The 'separate but equal' decision of the Supreme Court saw blacks facing prejudice on a daily basis: in schools, in the workplace, in social and leisure activities and in politics. The lack of any committed effort from governments of the time to ensuring civil rights for black Americans was a major problem.

Other problems facing black Americans included **popular prejudice**.

Black Americans also faced the horrors of the **Ku Klux Klan**. Though popular in southern states, it was the development of the Klan as a national organisation that created significant problems for the development of civil rights. In the early 1920s, many northern people in the big cities treated the Klan as a joke. However, the mood changed as the march in Washington DC showed that the Klan was a powerful organisation.

Despite the 15<sup>th</sup> amendment, blacks were prevented from voting in the South as new state laws placed restrictions on who could vote. This led to a **lack of political influence** over who governed the country.

By 1918, most black Americans lived in the Southern states of America. Most of them worked in jobs that would have been done previously by slaves, plantation farming, but now they were paid for their work. However, due to the sharecropping system that existed, most lived in poverty, which led to **economic inequalities**.

By the 1920s, there was a growing awareness amongst blacks of their own separate sense of identity as black Americans. However, the **divisions within the black community** about how best to campaign for greater rights was also a significant problem.

### Activity 1

1. Describe the history of black people in the USA up until 1918.
2. Explain the different reasons why it was difficult for black Americans to achieve civil rights before 1941. You should take 1 sentence for each reason.

## B. Legal Impediments: Jim Crow

### Learning Intentions:

- I will be able to explain how legal impediments prevented black people in the USA achieving civil rights before 1941.

After the Civil War, the Southern states were determined to keep control over the black population and enforce white supremacy. As each state has its own state government that could pass its own laws affecting life within the state, Southern states began to rewrite their constitutions to discriminate against black people and ensured that black and white Americans were segregated. The name given to these laws was "Jim Crow" named after a white stage performer called Dizzy Rice who used to dress up as a black man (*'Jim Crow'*) and make a fool of black people by showing them as stupid, lazy and unreliable. Most Jim Crow laws were passed between 1870 and 1900.



### Education

White and black pupils attended different schools. The Supreme Court stated that as long as they were of equal quality then this was fine. However, black children received an inferior education. There were also restrictions in careers such as law and medicine.



*Summer High School, Kansas*



*Berryton High School, Kansas*

"Textbooks shall not be used between the white and coloured schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them." *North Carolina*

## Employment

"It is illegal for black and white textile workers to use the same doorways, bathrooms or canteens," *South Carolina*

"Black barbers are banned from cutting the hair of white women and children". *Georgia, 1926*

"No white female nurse to nurse in wards in which Negro men are placed."  
*Alabama*

## Recreation and Leisure

"It shall be unlawful to run a restaurant, at which white and coloured people are served in the same room, unless they are separated by a solid partition and unless a separate entrance from the street is provided." *Alabama*

"There will be separate cinemas, theatres, cafes, restaurants, shops, waiting rooms, toilets, cemeteries, hospitals, parks, swimming pools and separate carriages on public transport for black and white people." *Southern States*

"Black people are not allowed to take books out of libraries", *Georgia*.

"Black people must give up their seats on both trains and buses if a white person needs to sit down." *Alabama*.

## Politics

"Literacy tests will be used as a means of determining voter registration", *Alabama*.

"Black people are prohibited from holding public office and cannot stand for election", *Louisiana*.

## Family

"All marriages between a white person and a negro, or between a white person and a person of negro descent to the fourth generation, are hereby forever prohibited." *Florida*

"If a black and white person (man and woman) are found living together they shall be imprisoned for a period of 12 months and fined." *Alabama.*

"White convicts shall have separate apartments for both eating and sleeping from the negro convicts." *Mississippi*

*"If there must be Jim Crow railway carriages then there should be Jim Crow trams on the streets ... also on passenger boats. There should be Jim Crow waiting rooms at the stations and Jim Crow eating places. In courts there should be Jim Crow sections in the jury boxes and a separate Jim Crow witness stand and even a Jim Crow Bible for coloured witnesses to kiss."*

But a few months later the same editor wrote another article in the newspaper.

*"What I obviously thought was stupid and ridiculous in a short space of time became reality. All the things I thought were so outrageous have now been accepted as normal – even the Jim Crow Bible! What was insanity is now sane!"* Editor of *The Charleston News*, 1890s.

As early as 1916 black protesters complained to President Woodrow Wilson about the segregation of toilets and eating facilities in Federal Government offices and that Jim Crow was being used to make sure that black men only received the lowest paid jobs. The President said, *"Segregation is not humiliating and is a benefit for you black gentlemen"*. The Federal Government had no power to stop individual states passing "Jim Crow" laws.

Later Presidents such as Herbert Hoover and Franklin Roosevelt, who governed at a time of great social and economic need, showed no great interest in assisting black people and largely ignored calls for new laws on civil rights. Neither of these Presidents was prepared to challenge clear breaches of federal law by Southern state governors in the 1930s – who often used the economic crisis as an excuse to extend 'Jim Crow' segregation laws. As a consequence black people were relegated to being 'second-class' citizens, found it difficult to find jobs and buy or rent property and were denied the same treatment as white citizens.

## Activity 2

1. Collect a copy of the following five images from your teacher. In your groups, analyse the images to demonstrate your understanding of the Jim Crow Laws. Be prepared to share your thoughts with the rest of the class.





2. Describe the different Jim Crow Laws and then explain why this made it difficult for black people to achieve Civil Rights before 1941. See if you can find out about any more Jim Crow Laws that the Southern States passed before 1941.

**Housing**

**Leisure**

**Travel**

**Education**

**How did the Jim Crow Laws  
discriminate against black  
people in the USA?**

3. Which of the Jim Crow laws do you think was the most humiliating/oppressive/difficult for black Americans to endure?

### **Homework 2**

Now that you have gathered your evidence for factor one, you are ready to use it to write up your first factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

## C. 'Separate But Equal'

### Learning Intentions:

- To explain why the decision of the Supreme Court affected the fight for civil rights for black people.

The Jim Crow laws were an incredibly important legal impediment that ensured black Americans were denied their Fourteenth Amendment rights, but how could Jim Crow be legal? The answer to that question lay in a Supreme Court ruling of 1896.



In 1892, Homer Plessy objected to having to move from his seat in a 'White Only' carriage in Louisiana. Plessy, who was born in New Orleans and was a carpenter and shoemaker, looked white. He was very fair-skinned as he only had one black ancestor, one of his great-grandparents. However, in the state of Louisiana, he was still considered a 'Negro'.

When he was asked to move to the black section of the train, he refused and was arrested. Eventually the case went to the Supreme Court where Plessy argued that the State of Louisiana had been unconstitutional by enforcing Jim Crow and that it had broken the Fourteenth Amendment that said black people should have full civil liberties, which include their right to freedom and therefore should be treated the same way as whites. (The Supreme Court is the most important law court in America as decisions made here are of national importance and are absolute and final. All of the other courts in the United States must follow the ruling made by the Supreme Court.). Plessy lost the case and the justices ruled in favour of states' right to decide their own laws on race relations. This decision had a major impact on the civil rights of black people in the USA and was to affect race relations in the USA for the next 60 years.

The Supreme Court agreed that the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment was to make sure that blacks were treated by law in the same way as whites, but the Supreme Court said "*Laws which keep the races apart do not mean that one race is better or worse than the other.*" In other words, it was perfectly acceptable for black and white people to be kept

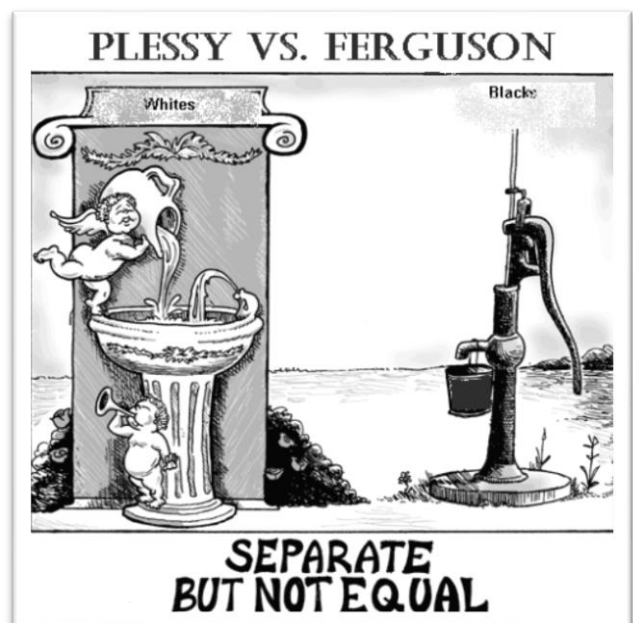
separate as long as equal facilities were provided for each race. The decision of the Supreme Court was called 'the separate but equal' decision.

*"We cannot say that the law which authorizes or even requires the separation of the two races in public conveyances is unreasonable or more obnoxious to the Fourteenth Amendment than the acts of Congress requiring separate schools for colored children in the District of Columbia. We consider the underlying fallacy (misconception) of the plaintiff's (complainer) argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it."* **Henry Billings Brown, Supreme Court Justice, 1896.**

Many Southerners were pleased with the decision of the Supreme Court as it legitimised Jim Crow.

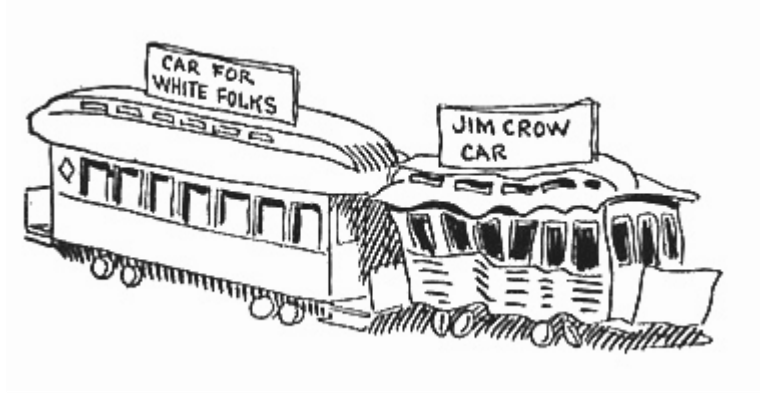
*"It is necessary that this principle be applied in every relation of Southern life. God Almighty drew the color line and it cannot be obliterated. The negro must stay on his side of the line and the white man must stay on his side, and the sooner both races recognise this fact and accept it the better it will be for both."*  
**Richmond Times, 1900.**

Black people were saddened by the decision of the Supreme Court. They knew that white Southerners were unlikely to provide equal services. Black people said that the decision of the Supreme Court made it legal in the USA to discriminate against them and they were right. This decision by the Supreme Court would go on to form the basis of the Jim Crow laws in the Southern states that kept blacks and whites apart. The outcome of the Plessey Case was not challenged, or overturned, until 1954.



### Activity 3

1. Describe, in cartoon form, the story of Homer Plessy as he took on the US justice system.



2. Explain the reasons why the 'Separate by equal' decision had a negative impact on black Americans' campaign for civil rights.

### Homework 3

Now that you have gathered your evidence for factor two, you are ready to use it to write up your second factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

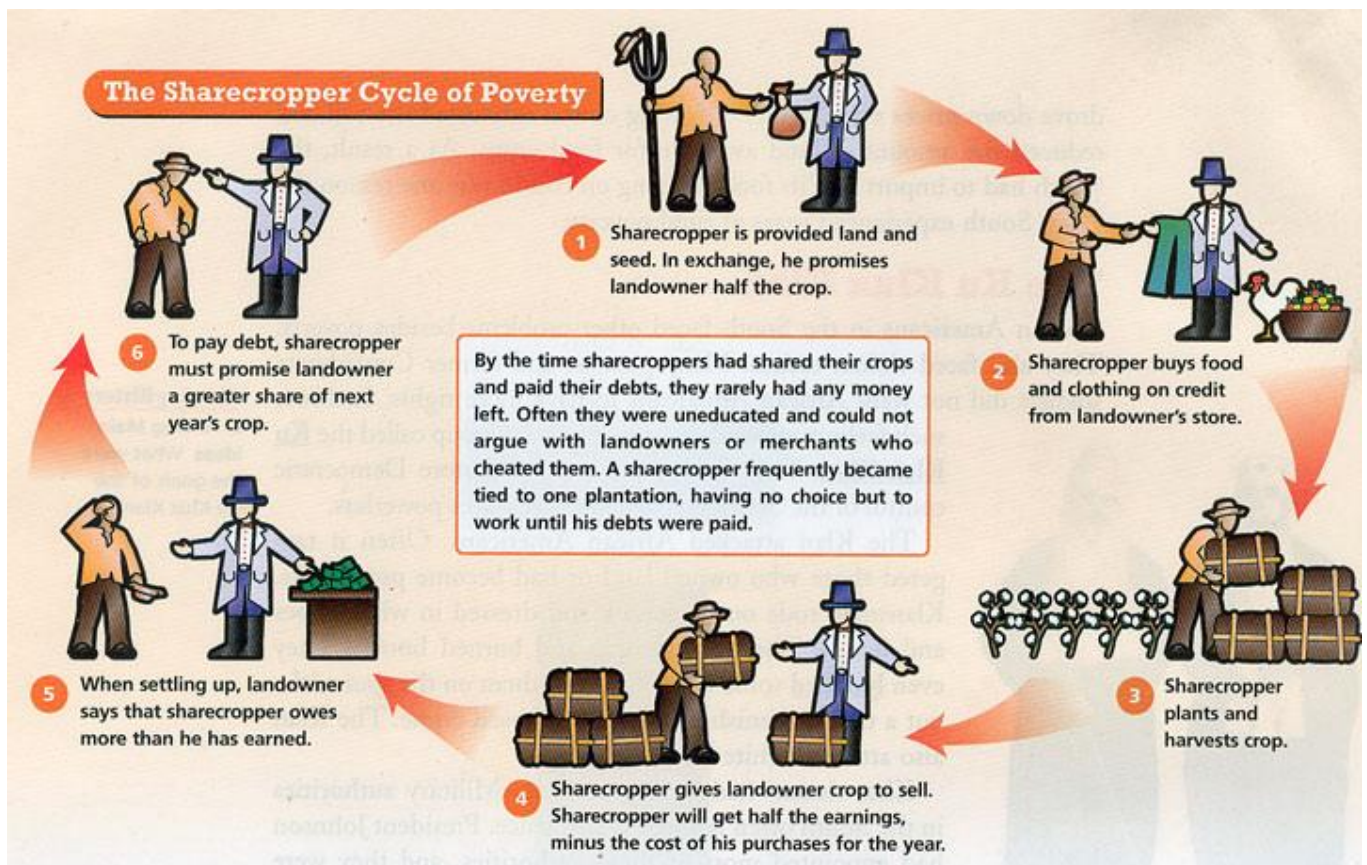
## D. Economic Obstacles

### Learning Intentions:

- I will be able to explain why economic inequalities prevented black people in the USA achieving civil rights before 1941.

### 1. Sharecropping

When slavery ended in 1865, white southern planters, who would have traditionally used slaves to farm their cotton plantations, now had to pay black people to farm their land. The problem was they did not have enough money to pay them. The former slaves, did not have enough money to buy their own land to farm, needed a job to survive. Sharecropping was the answer and became very common in the South. However, it was an obstacle to achieving civil rights for black Americans.



By the 1930s, most Africa-American farmers were sharecroppers. However, sharecropping kept many African-Americans in poverty or debt and ensured they

remained socially inferior to white people. It hindered the campaign for civil rights as there was very little time to campaign for civil rights as they were too busy trying to make a living in order to survive.

## 2. The Great Migration

### **Why move north?**

Southern black people were poorly paid, confined to unskilled jobs, paid less than white workers doing the same job and were often the 'last hired and the first fired'. In the South, black Americans could be beaten, kidnapped and killed and the white authorities did not seem to care. For those who dreamed of equality of opportunity the South was now a lost cause; their only hope lay in a move to the North. They moved to the cities in search of a better life, better jobs, better wages and to escape poverty, segregation and race violence in the South. From 1915, the great exodus from the South to the North had begun. In 1900, 90% of black Americans lived in the South. Between 1910 and 1920, the South lost 5% of its native black population. By 1930, a further 8% had moved north. By 1940, it was 22%. Many black people believed the North was a land of opportunity where they could find the American dream.

Throughout the 1920s, blacks continued their movement to the North, taking jobs in the expanding industrial sector. Life was better in the North as there was no Klan and no Jim Crow laws. Or so they thought. Despite the problems that remained for black Americans in the North, between 1920 and 1930, 824,000 Blacks moved North. Despite the huge numbers migrating North, in 1930 over 50% of the country's black population remained in the rural south.

### **Case study: Chicago, Illinois**

The 1920s saw African-American migration replace European immigration. African-Americans settled on Chicago's South Side near jobs in the stockyards and meatpacking plants. The African-American population of Chicago increased from 44,000 in 1916 to 109,000 in 1919. However, it transpired that the North was no more tolerant than the South. The rapid influx of African-American migrants led to racial tensions. Whites and blacks were in direct competition for jobs. If a migrant black was more educated and skilled than a white, the white would get the priority in the job market. Many black people found they could only get the worst jobs for the lowest wages. Most blacks were excluded from skilled work by trade unions and racially prejudiced employers. The situation got worse in times of recession when unemployment increased.

The increased demand for housing also led to racial tensions. White property owners refused to rent or sell houses to African-Americans. If they did, it was in the poorer areas of town. These ghettos became racially segregated and rundown. Landlords converted houses into rooming houses (bed-sits for rent) and properties soon fell into disrepair. Popular prejudice led to rents being higher for blacks than whites: in Chicago in 1910, a 7 room apartment for working class whites cost \$25 a week but \$37.50 a week for blacks. Therefore, black people could only afford to live in the poorest areas of northern cities and these developed into ghettos with very poor standards of living. The poor conditions soon led to the spread of disease and crime. The death rate amongst the black population was sometimes over 40% higher than the white population. Blacks found it hard to escape because whites would not sell them housing in better areas of the cities where whites lived.



When black migrants arrived in Chicago, some of them thought they had found heaven, if some of their letters home were to be believed. However, other migrants were not so sure.

My dear sisters,

I am well and thankful to be in a city with no lynching's and no Klansmen. I share a room with my brother and work in the same factory. We only get a dollar a day for our work but the hours are not too long and it's nice to get home in safety. God had been good to me. Hurry up and come to Chicago.

Yours, Minnie

Dear Annie,

I guess you'll have heard about the good times up her in the north but think twice before you come here. Sure, there are no lynching's here but we still get called 'nigger' or 'boy' and my job in the car factory is hard, low paid and dirty. The room I live in is damp and overcrowded. We live in a ghetto – that means a real run down

slum area. All us poor black people live in this area. I'll tell you this – it's not the bright new life we hoped for.

Your, Leroy

The lack of suitable housing resulted in race riots in Northern cities like Chicago. Black soldiers returning from the war were in a militant mood and no longer willing to put up with old patterns of discrimination. They had fought for their country and deserved better treatment. In the summer of 1919, riots erupted in 20 cities. The worst was in Chicago. Here the violence lasted 13 days, 23 black people and 15 white people were killed, 537 were injured and 10,000 families, most black, were left homeless. Across the country, 70 black people were lynched. The federal government did very little.

The Great Migration did help some black Americans improve their lives. The loss of so many black people from the South who were prepared to take a risk to improve their lives by moving to the North, robbed the South of many potential civil rights leaders and campaigners of the future. However, this did lead to the increase of African-Americans living in the North. As the black working class grew, a new middle class provided services to blacks. These 'black metropolises' created a base and a market for African-American newspapers, businesses, jazz clubs, churches and political organisations that provided the launchpad for civil rights campaigns that would grow in the 1950s. It was in the cities, especially New York's Harlem, that the ideas of Marcus Garvey took root.

On the other hand, although there was no Jim Crow laws or formal segregation in the Northern cities, the North was still a racially-prejudice society with informal segregation existing. For example, in Muncie, Indiana it was shown that although black and white children attended the same schools, churches, and cinemas were segregated. Racial discrimination in industrial life was still widespread. Most car plants were all white or hired blacks in small numbers. Henry Ford believed that whites, as a superior race, were obligated to help Black people establish decent lives. However, his hiring practices were not strictly altruistic. He found that black workers were more loyal. In 1926, Ford employed 10,000 black employees. The end of World War I saw 4 million soldiers return wanting their jobs back. As a result, the migrant blacks were regarded as a threat to the job security of unskilled white workers already in the north. Black people had moved North in search of the American Dream but many found that discrimination and poverty existed in the north as well as the south; there was still a very substantial gap between the social and economic status of whites and blacks. In the North, there were no Klan signs but for many black people the dream was as far away as ever.



## Activity 4

1. Explain what Sharecropping was and why it caused a problem for black Americans seeking greater civil rights.

**Source A** explains why many African-Americans moved North.

World War I was the main impetus for the migration North. The war meant there was less immigrants coming from Eastern Europe and post-war legislation to limit immigration reduced the amount of unskilled labourers in the North's factories. The war industries were desperate for workers. Between 1916 and 1918, almost 500,000 black people moved North to fill the employment gaps in these industries that paid good wages. Northern industrial cities saw a remarkable increase in black populations. By 1920, New York was home to 152,000 Blacks – an increase of 66.3%; Philadelphia was home to 134,000 – up 58.9%; Chicago was home to 109,000 Blacks – up 148.2%.

2. How fully does **Source A** explain the reasons why African-Americans moved North during the Great Migration? Use **Source A** and information from your own knowledge.
3. What problems existed in Northern cities like Chicago that prevented black Americans from achieving civil rights before 1941?
4. Describe how moving to the North actually helped improve the economic and social position of many black Americans.

## Homework 4

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your third factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

## E. Ku Klux Klan

### Learning Intentions:

- I will be able to explain why the KKK became influential in American life and prevented black people achieving civil rights before 1941.

### The Early Klan

The KKK is an American terrorist organisation which originated in the southern states after their defeat in the Civil War. The first branch of the Ku Klux Klan was established in Tennessee in May 1866. Most of the leaders were former members of the Confederate Army. During this time, the Klan withheld their identities by wearing masks. They were draped in white sheets as they posed as the spirits of the dead Confederate soldiers returning to protect white communities from freed Black people. The KKK was determined to prevent the newly freed slaves from gaining equal rights with other Americans: to stop former slaves from getting an education, from gaining from economic advancement, from gaining voting rights and the right for Americans to bear arms. However, by the 1870s the KKK went into decline after being declared a terrorist organisation. Federal troops were used against them and the Federal Government brought numerous prosecutions against Klansmen.



### Klan Revival

However, by 1915 the Ku Klux Klan had been reformed in Georgia by William J. Simmons, a preacher influenced by the film, *Birth of a Nation*, directed by D.W. Griffith. The film glorified the KKK as the saviours of white society. It showed the white population of post-war Southern states at the mercy of newly-freed black slaves who were only stopped from rape, theft and murder when challenged by the heroic Klan. It was the first film ever to make over \$10 million and the first to be shown



in the White House where President Wilson publicly endorsed it. The film created a nationwide craze for the Klan, which proved to be a huge obstacle in the prevention of Civil Rights by 1941.

The Klan, also known as the 'Invisible Empire', was led by an Imperial Wizard. In 1923, Hiram Wesley Evans became the Klan's Imperial Wizard. He said, "*The history of the world is the fight for survival of the White race. Either we win or we die. The Klan will not die.*" Local Klan organisations were called Klaverns. Klansmen wore robes or sheets and masks topped with pointed hoods. By 1925, the Klan had 3 million members, including police officers, judges and politicians. All members of the KKK had to be native-born Americans. They had to be white, protestant, male and 16 years of age or older. No black Americans, Roman Catholics or Jews were allowed to be in the Klan. They did not believe in civil rights and thought black Americans were inferior to whites. They wanted to promote 'White Supremacy' through fear and intimidation.

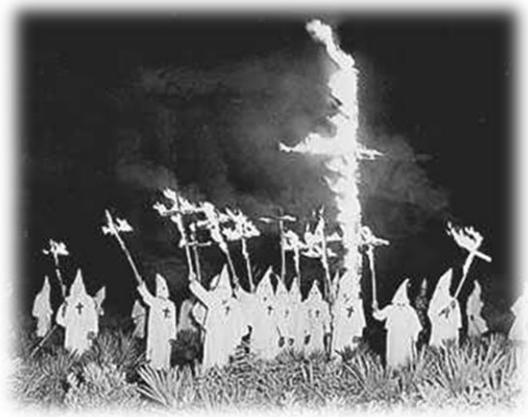
### **Support for the Klan**

The KKK's message was popular in a country where immigration was a serious issue and where many blacks were flooding into northern cities during the Great Migration. The Klan provided a sense of belonging to white 'Americans' who felt threatened by the changes around them. As new populations poured into cities, rapidly changing neighbourhoods created social tensions between ethnic groups. "*Ethnic and racial tensions also explained the dramatic rise of the Ku Klux Klan ... The Klan was essentially negative and exclusive. Membership was open only to 'native born white American citizens ...'*", Maldwyn A Jones: *The Limits of Liberty*, 1983. Most Klansmen were uneducated, lower-class white people who felt that they were doing what they could defend their jobs and homes from new immigrants who were coming to America. The KKK believed that the non-white, non-American, non-Protestant population needed to be controlled. The Klan justified their actions by saying they were protecting the 'American way of life'.

### **Activities of the Klan**

The Klan attacked any group they called 'un-American'; anyone the Klan believed was threatening traditional American life. In the 1920s all non-protestants, new immigrants and black Americans became targets of Klan attacks. In the South, the Klan's main targets were black Americans. "*You begin to cry about your rights and the mistreating of you and they'd murder you*", *All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*", Theodore Rosengarten 1975.

Klansman often burned large crosses on hillsides and near the homes of people they wished to frighten. If their victims still did not do what the Klansmen wanted them to do, victims might be kidnapped, whipped, mutilated, or murdered. Masked Klansmen marched through the streets of towns and cities carrying posters threatening various persons with punishment and warning others to leave town. The Klan used fear to stop black Americans registering to vote. *"When voting time came round the Ku Klux Klan would be waiting outside the voting place. No colored folk would try to vote."* Memphis Annie, Blues singer, 1925



### **Lynching**

Any black person who was believed to have committed a crime against a white person, or even against a black person who was regarded as *'an uppity nigger'* – a black person who was doing well or spoke up for his or herself – could be lynched in front of a white crowd with no trial and no defence. Lynching was the practice whereby a mob of several dozen or even several hundred, took the law into its own hands in order to injure and kill a person accused of some wrongdoing. Klan members, usually in rural areas, carried out lynchings of black people, taking the law into their own hands. They murdered people, usually by hanging. They would also whip, brand, and tar and feather their victims. However, lynching did not always mean a hanging:

*"The Negro was taken to a clearing in the woods. More than 500 people had each placed a piece of wood against a tree stump that made a pile nearly 6 feet high. The Negro was chained to the tree stump, beaten and then castrated. The fire was lit and a hundred men and women, young and old, joined hands and danced around the burning Negro. That night a big party was held in a nearby barn."* **The Washington Eagle in 1920.**



Black people in the Southern states of the USA did not have much education. Many were superstitious and lived in lonely farm shacks. When men in white robes appeared outside their homes with guns, ropes and torches it did not need much imagination for them to believe that white ghosts had come to kill them. *"If the Klan did not encourage wholesale ritual murder, it did develop extremely effective methods of harassment and intimidation in the twenties ... The Klan considered itself to be patriotic, righteous and justifiably aggressive"*, Daniel Snowman: America since 1920, 1968.

### **Influence of the KK in preventing Civil Rights**

Nobody knew for sure just how strong the Klan was because it was a secret organisation. However, it is estimated that by 1924, the Klan had 6 million members including many powerful people, such as police officers, judges and politicians.

*"Half the town belonged to the Klan when I was a boy. Most of the police were members. On nights when the Klan had its meetings there were no policemen around but instead Klansmen worked as traffic patrolmen."* Robert Coughlan, a Catholic boy in 1924.

In many cases, the local police failed to protect the victim and sometimes even played a part in the killing. Very few Klansmen were ever arrested despite their actions being illegal. They had important people such as the police on their side. They would bribe local police, threaten state politicians, and blackmail local employers.

The Klan also interfered with the political process in many states. In some state elections, only candidates who were 'Klan-approved' were allowed to stand for election.

*"In Colorado the Klan elected a Governor of the State, several judges and even the Denver chief of police. In one county of Alabama the Klan controlled judges, sheriffs and lawyers."* Adapted from *A History of the Klan*.

Politicians were reluctant to speak out against segregation and anti-lynching legislation, let alone full civil rights for black Americans due to the threat from the Klan. Campaigning for re-election in 1924, an Indiana Congressman said, *"I was told to join the Klan, or else"*. In certain states, such as Alabama, the Klan was not just a 'hate' group and showed a genuine desire for political and social reform. *"Although both critics and supporters tended to exaggerate the Klan's power, it did become an important force in local and national politics."* Michael Parrish: *Anxious Decades*, 1992. The state's Klansmen were among the foremost advocates of better public schools, effective prohibition enforcement, expanded road construction and other "progressive" political measures. The Klan attracted widespread support for its policies which appealed to 'middle-America', such as advocating improved law enforcement, honest government, better public schools, and traditional family life

attracted support across white social classes in states as far apart as Oklahoma and Oregon.

In the early 1920s, many people in the big cities treated the Klan as a joke. However, the mood changed in 1925 when the Klan's important friends in Washington D.C. persuaded President Coolidge to approve a KKK parade down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington D.C. This showed the power and influence the Klan had a political and social organisation.



*"Hundreds of people in the big cities had never seen a Klansman and they thought the KKK could be ignored or treated as a few nuts who dressed up. But once we saw 40,000 of the Klan marching through our capital, well, nobody laughed anymore."* **A man interviewed after the Klan marched through Washington in 1925.**

However, with reduced immigration and scandals involving sex and corruption, the Klan lost much support, so much so that by 1929 membership had dropped to an estimated 30,000. Although the Klan had lost its influence, it did not die out and race hatred and race murder continued. The Klan remained the symbol of white supremacy and the fear the Klan created and the unopposed power they held, had a major influence on denying black Americans their full civil rights before 1941.



### Activity 5

1. Using the template below to guide you, research the Klan in 1920s USA to demonstrate your understanding of why it was important an important obstacle to civil rights for black Americans.

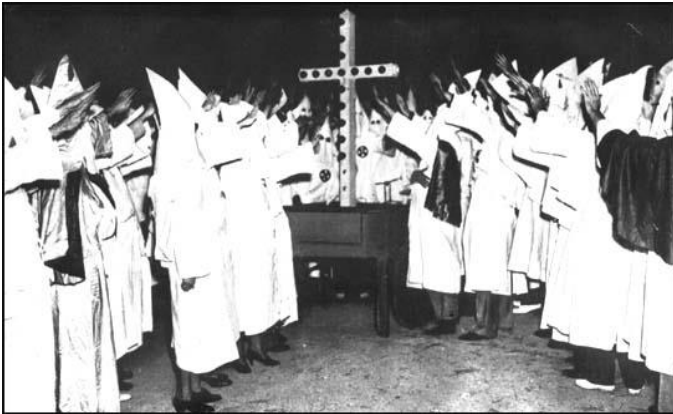
### Homework 5

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your fourth factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

## Origins, Decline and Revival

## Membership and Organisational Structure

## Targets



## Support for the Klan



## Activities

## Influence of the Klan

## F. Lack of Political Influence

### Learning Intentions:

- To explain why the political restrictions placed upon black people was an obstacle to achieving civil rights.

### Voting Restrictions

In theory, black Americans had the right to vote. The 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the US Constitution (1870) made it illegal to deny the vote to anyone based on his race or colour. Therefore, according to the Constitution, all black men over the age of 21 could vote. However, the reality was very different.

Many whites, particularly in the South, found it difficult to accept that black people were afforded equal status to them. In response, many Southern states changed their constitutions to prevent black people from voting so that they could not elect anyone who might oppose the Jim Crow laws. By 1900, almost no black person in the South was able to vote easily.

State	Year	Number of Blacks with the right to vote
Louisiana	1896	130,000
	1900	5,300
Alabama	1900	180,000
	1902	3,000

Voting rights was therefore a key factor in ensuring continued white dominance in the government of southern states.

In order to vote in the USA a person had to register. Many Southern states introduced changes to their constitutions that made it almost impossible for black Americans to register to vote. The Southern states could not ban blacks from voting just because they were black. They had to introduce laws that would prevent black people from voting without being explicitly racist.

- A poll tax was introduced which had to be paid before you could register to vote. This stopped many blacks from registering to vote because they were so poor and could not afford to pay the tax.



- Residency qualifications in states such as Mississippi were introduced. Blacks had to prove that they had lived in the state for two years and for one year in the election district. This affected black sharecroppers who were in the habit of moving yearly in search of better opportunities.
- Literacy tests introduced. This involved reading out a difficult document in front of a white listener who would judge them. Not surprisingly, most black men who were brave enough to take the test failed, and therefore they could not register to vote.
- Property ownership was a condition in some states. Most black Americans were poor farmers and did not own property, therefore were banned from voting.
- In some states, blacks could only register to vote if they could answer correctly a series of questions such as "How many bubbles does a bar of soap make?" As many could not answer, therefore they could not vote.

These voting restrictions would apply to all citizens of the state, including poor, illiterate white voters. This was not acceptable, so the states also included a 'grandfather clause'. This allowed those whose ancestors had the right to vote before the Civil War to vote, regardless of whether they could pay the tax or were literate. Since virtually no black American had an ancestor who could vote before the Civil War, they were excluded from registering to vote.

In addition to the voting qualifications that made it difficult for blacks to vote, voting rights were also denied by the simple use of illegal methods. Black men who went to register to vote were threatened and beaten up. Very often white officials at voter registration centres would simply deny access to potential black voters. One Senator from Virginia summed this up very clearly in 1900:

*"We are here to do all we can to stop as many Negro voters as we can from voting. We will try to do it legally. We will not harm the right of white people to vote."*

## **Growth of political influence**

The Great Migration brought a slow but steady growth of political influence for many Northern blacks. They became freer to speak and act away from Jim Crow and voting restrictions. Black voters in Northern cities became increasingly important to white politicians, which ultimately opened up opportunities for black politicians. Republicans and Democrats actively sought out their support. This political power enabled them to elect representatives to State legislatures and Congress, and to put pressure on political parties in closely contested elections to make assurances for black civil rights.

However, for most black Americans there was no real way for them to make an effective protest against the abuse of white power. The result was that very few black men could vote. By 1915, almost every southern state had introduced voting qualifications and only 3% of blacks could vote. Although in some Northern areas black voters elected black representatives and senators, the reality was that most black Americans could not vote. Politicians in the South relied on white voters for election success, and as most of the Southern voters were racist and would not support a politician who wanted to help black people; there was therefore no incentive for them to campaign for black civil rights. Even President Wilson in 1918 described black Americans as '*an ignorant and an inferior race*'. This is important and stopped black Americans achieving Civil Rights because if they could vote then they could not elect politicians to fight against Jim Crow Laws and help improve their position in America; they could not serve on a jury as they were not registered to vote, therefore there were very few blacks on juries and verdicts were enforced via racism. Once blacks were deprived of the vote, it was easier to pass laws enforcing rigid segregation in practically all public facilities, obstructing the fight for civil rights.

### Activity 6

1. Explain why Southern states introduced restriction on voting for black Americans.
2. Describe the legal and illegal restrictions that were introduced to stop black Americans from voting.
3. Explain why some black Americans had political influence.

### Homework 6

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your fifth factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

## G. Divisions in the Black Community

### Learning Intentions:

- I will be able to explain the differences between the three civil rights groups
- I will be able to explain the reasons why the early civil rights movement failed to achieve civil rights for black Americans.

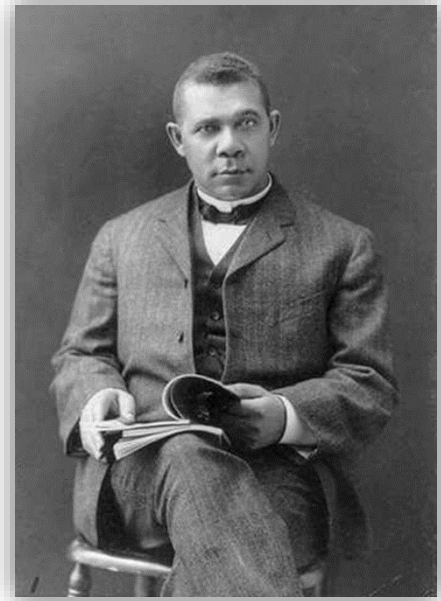
In the years following 1896, the black population of America did not just accept segregation and discrimination as 'normal'. World War I had inspired hope amongst many black Americans. However, the 1920s produced despair as black people, in particular returning soldiers, found that racism was still part of their daily lives. Growing signs of black impatience and white injustice were apparent. Black migrants to the north found themselves facing problems they thought they had left behind: inadequate housing, discrimination in employment and racial violence. Many concluded that if blacks were to improve their lot they would have to fight on their own behalf.

Three early civil rights campaigns emerged after 1896 as a reaction to the Plessy vs Ferguson case. However, each group had different ideas about how to win Civil Rights. Later, these organisations would combine into the Civil rights Movement, but not yet. The divisions within the black community as to how best to achieve civil rights did not help the cause.

### Group 1: Booker T. Washington and the Tuskegee Institute

Booker T. Washington was one of the foremost African-American leaders of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Born into slavery in Virginia in the mid-to-late 1850s, Booker T. Washington put himself through school and became a teacher. In 1881, he founded the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, which focused on training African-Americans in agricultural pursuits. He argued that the best way to advance the African-American race was through education first, demanding civil rights second. He reassured whites that nothing in the Tuskegee programme would threaten white supremacy or pose any economic competition to whites. However, Washington's ideas on how to advance the African-American race clashed with many black leaders of the time including W.E.B. Du Bois.

Under Booker T. Washington's leadership, Tuskegee became a leading school in the country. He taught that economic success for African-Americans would take time, and that subordination to whites was a necessary evil until African-Americans could prove they were worthy of full economic and political rights. He believed that if African-Americans worked hard and obtained financial independence and cultural advancement, they would eventually win acceptance and respect from the white community.



In a speech in Georgia in 1895 known as the 'Atlanta Compromise', Washington stated that African-Americans should accept disenfranchisement and social segregation as long as whites allow them economic progress, educational opportunity and justice in the courts. This started a firestorm in parts of the African-American community, especially in the North. Activists like W.E.B. Du Bois (Group 2) deplored Washington's philosophy and his belief that African-Americans were only suited to vocational training. Du Bois criticized Washington for not demanding equality for African-Americans, as granted by the 14th Amendment.

*"You can be sure in the future, as in the past, that you and your (white) families will be surrounded by the most patient, faithful, law-abiding and unresentful people that the world has ever seen."*

Though Washington had done much to help advance many African-Americans, there was some truth in the criticism. During Washington's rise as a national spokesperson for African-Americans, they were systematically excluded from the vote and political participation through Jim Crow laws as segregation and discrimination became institutionalised throughout the South and much of the country.

In 1901, President Theodore Roosevelt invited Booker T. Washington to the White House, making him the first African-American to be so honoured. Both President Roosevelt and his successor, President William Howard Taft, used Washington as an adviser on racial matters, partly because he accepted racial subservience. While some African-Americans looked upon Washington as a hero, others, like Du Bois, saw him as a traitor. Many Southern whites, including some prominent members of Congress, saw Washington's success as an affront and called for action to put African-Americans "in their place."

Associate yourself with people of good quality, for it is better to be alone than in bad company.



Success is not to be measured so much by the position that one has reached in life but by the obstacles which he has overcome while trying to succeed.

There are two ways of exerting one's strength: one is pushing down, the other is pulling up.

If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.

You should stop demanding equal rights. Education is the answer. Show white people that you can work hard and save for the future and then they will see that the black man is a respectable person. Then we will be granted our rights.

## **Group 2: William du Bois and the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP)**

In 1905, a group of 29 prominent African-American intellectuals, led by W.E.B. Du Bois (the first African-American to be awarded a degree from Harvard University), met as they were concerned with legislation passed by Southern states that disfranchised blacks. Through the early 1900s, Southern legislatures dominated by white Democrats, ratified new constitutions and laws creating barriers to voter registration with more complex election rules. Black voter registration and turnout dropped markedly in the South as a result. Men who had been voting for thirty years in the South now did not



**W.E.B. Du Bois**

"qualify" to register. Because hotels in the U.S were segregated, the men met on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. As a result, the group came to be known as the Niagara Movement. The Niagara Movement, (1905–10) called for full political, civil, and social rights for African-Americans. This was in contrast to the philosophy proposed by Booker T. Washington. Despite the achievement of a few scattered civil rights victories at the local level, the group suffered from organisational weakness and lack of funds and it never was able to attract mass support. After the Springfield (Illinois) Race Riot of 1908, however, white liberals joined with the Niagara Movement and founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) the following year.

A group of white and black intellectuals founded NAACP in 1909-1910 in New York City. Its mission was to secure for all people the rights guaranteed in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, by "ensuring the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights of all persons and to eliminate racial hatred and racial



**Ida Bell Wells -  
Barnett**



**Mary White-  
Ovington**

discrimination". It took seriously the idea that the solution to problems began in the education of the people. United in their opposition to Booker T. Washington's approach to Civil Rights, the NAACP leaders sought, first, to make whites aware of the need for racial equality by launching a programme of speechmaking, lobbying, and publicising the issue. The only African-American among the organization's executives, Du Bois was appointed director of publications and research. In 1910, he established the official journal of the NAACP, *The Crisis* that completely rejected the

idea that blacks were in anyway inferior to whites. In 1910, Du Bois and 22 other African-Americans issued a statement attacking the ideas of Booker T. Washington:

*"We regret to say that Mr Booker T. Washington is giving the impression that the Negro problem in America is moving towards a satisfactory solution. He is giving an impression which is not true. His program of industrial education, conciliation of the South, and submission and silence as to civil and political rights is wrong. Today in eight states where the bulk of the Negroes live, black men of property and university training can be, and usually are, by law denied the ballot, while the most ignorant white man votes."*

In its early years, the NAACP challenged various Jim Crow Laws and in 1913 campaigned against President Wilson's introduction of racial segregation in the federal government. It won the right for African-American soldiers to serve as officers in the First World War, which resulted in hundreds of African-Americans being recruited to fight.

A series of early court battles attacked segregation and racial inequality, including a victory against a discriminatory Oklahoma law that regulated voting by means of a grandfather clause, used by many southern states to prevent blacks from voting, (*Guinn v. United States*, 1910). This helped establish the NAACP's importance as a legal advocate. It later won a Supreme Court decision in 1915 against the grandfather clause.

The NAACP waged a 30-year campaign against lynching, among the Association's top priorities. In 1922, the NAACP strongly supported the Anti-Lynching Bill (Dyer Bill), which would have punished those who participated in or failed to prosecute lynch mobs. Though the bill would pass the House of Representatives, the Senate never passed the bill, or any other anti-lynching legislation, as Southern Senators defeated it. However, the NAACP report *"Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1919"* is widely credited with starting a public debate and drastically decreasing the incidence of lynching.

The 1930s was the NAACP most productive period of legal advocacy. They commissioned the *Margold Report*, which became the basis for the successful reversal of the separate-but-equal doctrine that had governed public facilities since 1896's *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling.

Throughout the 1940s, the NAACP saw enormous growth in membership, recording roughly 600,000 members by 1946. It continued to act as a legislative and legal advocate, pushing for a federal anti-lynching law and for an end to state-mandated segregation.

The fledgling organization also learned to harness the power of publicity through its 1915 battle against D. W. Griffith's inflammatory *Birth of a Nation*. Blacks were portrayed as the root of all evil, unworthy of freedom and voting rights and always lusting after white women. In contrast, the KKK was glorified and were portrayed in a heroic light as a healing force restoring order to the chaos and lawlessness in the post-Civil War era. The movie's overt racism outraged African-Americans and civil rights advocates. Throughout the spring of 1915 the NAACP in a bid to ban the film, was at the forefront of the protests, which included mass rallies which played out in every venue imaginable: city hall, the streets, the courts, and the Massachusetts state legislature. The effort failed to stop Griffith's movie, but it succeeded in galvanizing the civil rights movement around the country. The film led to the revival of the KKK in Georgia. Showings of *The Birth of a Nation* were stopped in only a few states. Nearly three million people saw *The Birth of a Nation* making it the first Hollywood 'blockbuster'.

Under James Weldon Johnson, the NAACP's first black executive secretary, membership had grown to ninety thousand, of which nearly half was in the South. Under his leadership, followed by that of Walter White (who served as secretary from 1930 to 1955), the NAACP became the dominant civil rights organization in the country. However, despite all the vigour and occasional success, the NAACP was not entirely successful. It was an organisation dominated by whites and well-off middle-class blacks from the North. The organisation did not seem to represent the majority of black people who were poor Southerners. It also failed to inspire the black urban masses of both the North and the South. These people were too frightened and intimidated to push for rights. However, the NAACP became more influential during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.



### Group 3: Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)



**Marcus Garvey**

Born in Jamaica, Marcus Garvey was a black nationalist who founded the Universal Negro Improvement Association, which was dedicated to promoting African-Americans and their re-settlement in Africa. Garvey was self-educated, reading books from his stonemason father's large library. After corresponding with Booker T. Washington, Garvey came to New York in 1916 and concluded that the growing black aspirations for justice, wealth, and a sense of community in northern cities could provide the wealth and unity to end discrimination in the United States. He formed a UNIA chapter in Harlem to promote a separatist philosophy of social, political, and economic freedom for blacks.

Garvey believed that developing separate black institutions would make most progress. Therefore, the initial focus of the movement was to inspire black people to see their self-worth, to express themselves through a variety of commercial enterprises, self-help organisations, religious institutions and publications. The UNIA encouraged blacks to begin in commercial business ventures. The most hopeful venture of all was the creation of the 'Black Star Line' in 1919, a failed shipping company that hoped to establish trade and commerce between Africans in America and Africa.

Garvey was critical of the NAACP's push for racial integration. He had nothing but contempt for whites and organisations like the NAACP that aimed to bring blacks and whites together. In 1918, Garvey began publishing the widely distributed newspaper *Negro World* to convey his message. He preached that whites were devils whose racial bias was so deeply ingrained that it was futile to appeal to their sense of justice. Garvey's appeal was his assertion of pride in being black. He publicised black achievements, opposed inter-racial marriages, and, in a reversal of the norm, looked down on light-skinned blacks. Garvey argued that blacks throughout the world were one people. He linked the struggle for black rights in America to the freeing of Africa from colonial rule. Garvey encouraged skilled Americans to go to their 'African homeland'. His slogan became 'Back to Africa', as he claimed that only hope was to flee America and build a new Black Republic in Africa. This was a somewhat naïve message, however it did help create a 'New Negro' who was proud of his colour, race and heritage, and was prepared to resist both white mistreatment and white ideas. The message of 'Black is beautiful' built racial pride amongst the masses of poor and unskilled city blacks. No one had ever spoken like Garvey before. It was an intoxicating vision of bringing all the scattered children of Africa

into one mighty force. Indeed, the city ghetto dwellers were to hail Garvey as a saviour, and christen him 'Black Moses'.

The UNIA grew with remarkable speed. Membership was strong from the new black middle class but attracted followers from virtually every segment of black America. In August 1920, UNIA claimed 4 million members and held its first International Convention at Madison Square Garden in New York City. The movement had swollen to 6 million members by 1923 to become the biggest and best known African-American organisation.

Many found his words inspiring, but not all. White society feared him and his organisation while some established black leaders found his separatist philosophy ill conceived. W.E.B. Du Bois of the N.A.A.C.P. called Garvey, "*the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America.*" Garvey, in return, felt Du Bois was an agent of the white elite. Despite tremendous achievements in building black morale, nevertheless many black leaders were highly critical of Garvey as there was no real plan for the future. However, historians argue that his "Back to Africa" and racial pride ideas were kept alive and resurfaced years later in the Black Power movement of the 1960s.

Although local UNIA chapters provided many social and economic benefits for their members, Garvey's main efforts failed: the Black Star Line suspended operations in 1922 and the other enterprises fared no better. Garvey's ambition and determination to lead inevitably collided with associates and black leaders in other organizations. His verbal talent and flair for the dramatic attracted thousands, but his faltering projects only augmented ideological and personality conflicts. In the end, he could neither unite blacks nor accumulate enough power to significantly alter the societies the UNIA functioned in.

By 1922, Garvey had caused too much alarm for the white authorities. The federal government were concerned by a city-based, organised, militant and large African-American organisation. The FBI investigated him and, with the help of the first African-American FBI agent who went undercover in the UNI leadership, he was arrested for mail fraud in connection with the sale of stock in the Black Star Line, which had now failed. Although there were irregularities connected to the business, the prosecution was probably politically motivated, as Garvey's activities had attracted considerable government attention. Garvey was sent to prison and later deported to Jamaica. In 1935, he moved permanently to London where he died on 10 June 1940. In 1964, his body was returned to Jamaica where he was declared the country's first national hero.

## **How destructive were the divisions within the African-American Organisations to the achievement of civil rights?**

The divisions within the black community caused their own difficulties as each group had its' own ideas on how best to advance the African-American cause; they did not work together to overcome Jim Crow and did not unite behind a common civil rights organisation.

DuBois and Garvey greatly disliked each other and the work they were doing, therefore they failed to find a way of working together to achieve civil rights for black Americans. Du Bois heavily criticised Garvey's extreme views and feared that Garvey's activities would undermine his efforts toward black rights in the USA. While Du Bois felt that the Black Star Line was "*original and promising*", he added, "*Marcus Garvey is, without doubt, the most dangerous enemy of the Negro race in America and in the world. He is either a lunatic or a traitor.*" Garvey in return called Du Bois "*purely and simply a white man's nigger*" and "*a little Dutch, a little French, a little Negro ... a mulatto ... a monstrosity.*"

Washington and Du Bois also came into conflict over a suitable way forward. Washington believed whites would come round to accepting civil rights if blacks were peaceful, reasonable, educated and made it clear they meant whites no harm, while Du Bois believed civil rights must be obtained via an aggressive strategy toward black integration into political and economic life. Washington considered Du Bois' tactics too provocative and would only serve to alienate whites, while Du Bois believed Washington was too moderate. Washington favoured 'separate but equal', while Du Bois wanted rapid integration. Washington believed blacks should concentrate on improving their economic position, while Du Bois argued Blacks needed legal and political equality before economic equality could be obtained.

Although unpopular with many black Americans, it was the ideas of Booker T. Washington which on reflection seem the most likely to gain white support. Washington was trying to ensure black Americans were equipped to overcome the economic difficulties they faced, which kept many in poverty. Du Bois and Garvey seemed unable to tackle and alleviate these problems. The organisations failed to engage many poor blacks, who were occupied in simply trying to survive from day-to-day.

Northern blacks were in a far better position to improve their status. They could vote, participate more in civil affairs and had more economic opportunities. Despite police harassment and the Ku Klux Klan, Northern blacks lived in a far less violent society. However, most concentrated upon improving their standards of living rather than joining the black advancement pressure groups. A handful of black businessmen in northern cities did well out of segregation as it gave them a captive market.

## Activity 7

1. Each group will be given a group that campaigned for black civil rights before 1941. In your groups, you will research your group using the prompts below to guide you. You will then prepare a presentation for the rest of the class explaining who they were and why they were ineffective in helping the Civil Rights movement. When each group is presenting their evidence, you will note down information for the other two groups.
  
2. Once you have heard all the information about the three groups, which group would you have supported if you were campaigning for black civil rights before 1941? Explain the reason for your decision.
  
3. Explain why the divisions within the African-American organisations was an obstacle to the achievement of civil rights.

<b>Group and Leader</b>	
<b>Date of Birth</b>	
<b>Origin of campaign movement</b>	
<b>Background</b>	
<b>Notable figures in movement</b>	
<b>Membership</b>	
<b>Aims/Beliefs/Philosophy as to how to achieve civil rights</b>	
<b>Relationship with the white population</b>	
<b>Criticism from other black organisations</b>	
<b>Criticism from whites</b>	
<b>Praise from blacks</b>	
<b>Praise from whites</b>	
<b>Criticism of W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey</b>	
<b>Successes of the movement</b>	
<b>Failures of the movement</b>	
<b>Impact/Consequences of his campaign</b>	

## **Homework 7**

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your sixth factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.

## H. Popular Prejudice

### Learning Intentions:

- I will be able to explain why racist attitudes prevented black people in the USA achieving civil rights before 1941.

Arguable the single biggest obstacle to the development of Civil Rights for black people was the continuing prejudice of white people across America. The growing intolerance of the 1920s and 1930s – seen in the move against alcohol, immigration and the teaching of evolution – all added to the sense that America was a divided society. Such views were common in the 1920s and 1930s, especially in the Southern States, but also in the North, there was a significant proportion of the white population hostile towards any suggestion that African-Americans were equal to themselves or should have the right to citizenship. There was also a belief in the inferiority of the black man, physically, morally and intellectually.

### The Scottsboro Boys

During the 1930s, much of the world's attention was riveted on the "Scottsboro Boys," nine black youths falsely charged with raping two white women in Alabama. This case, more than any other event in the South during the 1930s, revealed the barbarous treatment of blacks. The case began on March 25, 1931, when a number of white and black youths were riding on a freight train from their home in Chattanooga, Tennessee. They were traveling to see if they could find work. A fight broke out between a group of black and white teenagers and the whites jumped off the train. They reported the incident to a stationmaster that they had been attacked by the black youths. At the next stop, dozens of armed men rounded up nine black youths and took them to jail. They were about to be charged with assault when two white women were discovered hiding on the train. Although there was no evidence connecting the youth to the women, the nine youths were charged with raping the women. The women, who had had sexual relations with some of the white men and fearing prosecution for their sexual activity with the white men, agreed to testify against the black youths. The trial was held in the town of Scottsboro, Alabama. In April 1931, the all-white jury rejected the boys' not guilty plea and convicted all nine. All but the youngest, who was 12 years old, were sentenced to death, much to the pleasure of the 10,000 white demonstrators who had gathered outside the courthouse. In the South at that time, a black person was almost automatically found

guilty of a crime against a white person; there was no defence for a black man accused of a sex crime.

The announcement of the verdict and sentences brought a roar of protest in the North. It was known that one of the women had claimed to be attacked was the town prostitute and that suggested to many at the time that her evidence was not reliable. There were huge protests in Harlem, New York on the day the death sentences were announced. Across Northern cities money was collected to pay for a better defence team. Protests were held across the world in support of the 'Boys'. Things seemed to look up when one of the female victims said that the attack had never happened and that none of the 'Scottsboro Boys' had touch either of the white women.

In 1932, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned the convictions on the grounds that the defendants had not received adequate legal counsel in a capital case. The state of Alabama then retried one of the accused, Haywood Patterson, and once again convicted him. However, the trial judge, James Horton, set aside the verdict because he did not believe the defendant committed the crime. That decision caused him to be defeated in the next election. The state then retried Clarence Norris to see if the Supreme Court would again intervene. Norris was sentenced to death, but in 1935, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned this conviction, ruling that the state had excluded blacks from juries.

Alabama again tried and convicted Haywood Patterson, this time sentencing him to 75 years in prison. Further trials of the rest of the defendants resulted in more reconvictions and appeals until, after persistent pressure both Northern and Southern groups, Alabama freed the four youngest defendants (who had already served six years in jail) and later paroled all but Patterson. Patterson escaped in 1948 and fled to Michigan, where, three years later, he was convicted of manslaughter and died in prison. The last known surviving member of the group, Clarence Norris, fled to the North after his parole in 1946 and was granted a full pardon by the Governor of Alabama in 1976.

Most historians agree that racists concerns were caused in a large part due to a perceived threat to white jobs. The Klan got much of its support from victims of declining status. White 'Blue-collar' workers, clerks, small professionals and business men who were being challenged for jobs by African-Americans and European immigrants. White people were concerned that black Americans were going to steal their jobs and leave them in poverty. These attitudes were a factor in the continued development of the Ku Klux Klan all over America in the 1920s and 1930s and in the continued use of 'Jim Crow' laws to enforce segregation in the southern states. The Klan of the 1920s found themselves completely in tune with those whites threatened by the movement of the black people from the South from

1918 in the 'Great Migration'. Looking for better wages, jobs and prospects, there was an inevitable conflict with poor white Americans who were also looking for work and housing.

However, in some respects black people did seem to be accepted by whites. The 1920s were to become known as the Jazz Age. Jazz was the popular music of the time. This was largely the creation of black musicians from New Orleans. During the 1920s, the craze swept the country. White musicians took it up and for the first time it seemed as if whites appreciated black culture.

Furthermore, black culture and creativity exploded. Poets, playwrights, authors and composers flourished so much it became known as the Harlem Renaissance (1919-1930). This brought pride to the black communities as black intellectuals like the poet Langston Hughes and jazz musicians like Duke Ellington flourished. For the first time black culture was being experienced by large numbers of white intellectuals bringing hope that racial prejudice might disappear.

### **Activity 8**

1. Demonstrate where there were divisions in US society caused by prejudice and racism.
2. Demonstrate where white and black communities shared culture.

### **Homework 8**

Now that you have gathered all your evidence for this factor, you are ready to use it to write up your seventh factor. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this factor in class and will complete it at home.



## Conclusion

Clearly, the over-riding obstacle to the development of civil rights for black people was the continuing racism in American society. The Jim Crow laws, which grew up in large numbers all across the south following the judgement in the Plessey case, made life extremely difficult for black people. With the force of law on their side, racist white politicians could make decisions that suited themselves, giving no thoughts to the interests of black people who, of course, were not voters. It would be a mistake to assume that all racist attitudes and activities were restricted to southern states. Although the 'Jim Crow' culture did not spread to the north there were still clearly 'ghetto' areas in northern cities where the standard of living for black people was far less than it should have been in the world's richest country. This led to race riots and increased hostility between blacks and whites. The activities of the Ku Klux Klan – and other smaller but similar groups – led to real concerns about the way in which black people were treated. National campaigns against lynching failed, in part because of the great political influence held by the Klan through blackmail and intimidation. Even Presidents shied away from passing laws that might infringe on the activities of the Klan. Worse still were the arguments between black leaders – some of who hoped to co-operate with white politicians and others who sought to take direct action. If black leaders could not agree with each other, what hope did they have of persuading white voters to help them make the changes they needed.

### Homework 9

Now that you have written up all your factors, you are ready to write a conclusion. Your teacher and your History Skills booklet will help you with the structure of your essay. You will begin this in class and will complete it at home.