

## Discrimination and Segregation



**SS.912.A.2.5** Assess how Jim Crow Laws influenced life for African Americans and other racial/ethnic minority groups.

**Vocabulary Builder:** *illiterate* (i LIT er it) *adj.* unable to read or write

### Jim Crow and the South

Thought to be named for a character in a popular minstrel song, the so-called “Jim Crow” laws robbed Southern African Americans of rights they believed they had won with the Civil War Amendments. Requirements such as poll taxes and literacy tests denied many African American men the privilege to vote. Poll taxes required citizens to pay a fee to register to vote, preventing poor African Americans from voting. Literacy tests were used with the argument that one should be able to read in order to understand the issues. This prevented *illiterate* African Americans from voting. Without the ability to vote, African Americans could not push for equal rights through government representation.

In the South, physical segregation of blacks and whites became common. African Americans were forced to ride in separate railroad cars, attend separate schools, and even build separate cemeteries. African Americans believed the courts would safeguard their rights. However, the famous Supreme Court ruling in *Plessy v. Ferguson* legalized segregation laws by stating that having “separate but equal” facilities for African Americans and white Americans was not unconstitutional under the Fourteenth Amendment. This ruling upheld the “Jim Crow” laws of the era.

### The Terror of Lynching

Frustrated white Americans who believed in the superiority of their race used terror tactics to intimidate African Americans. Lynching, the unlawful hanging of a person by a mob, was an effective way to spread fear. Lynching was often an organized affair with law enforcement providing some level of cooperation, or simply looking the other way.

As the twentieth century dawned, many African Americans, fed up with being treated poorly or terrorized, decided to leave the restrictive laws of the South behind. They left the South in droves as part of the “Great Migration” to the North for many of the same reasons as foreign immigrants—hope for jobs and improved economic circumstances, freedom from poverty and discrimination, and a better life in general.

**Check for Understanding** How were Southern African Americans legally denied rights given to them in the Constitution?

## The African American Experience

**FL** **SS.912.A.5.8** Compare the views of Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. DuBois, and Marcus Garvey relating to the African American experience.

**Vocabulary Builder:** **status** (STAT uhs) *n.* legal position or condition of a person, group, country, etc.; **advocate** (AD vuh keyt) *v.* to speak in favor of; to support

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Though African Americans were now counted as United States citizens with the full rights of any other citizen according to the Constitution, they did not enjoy the same **status** as white Americans. Some who were not content with this situation, such as Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, and Ida B. Wells, rose up as leaders to fight for equality.

### Booker T. Washington

Born into slavery, Washington believed in the power of hard work and education. He lived this philosophy, spending much of his young life working at the same time he was pursuing his education. He became an educator himself, and in 1881 he was asked to organize an African American school in Tuskegee, Alabama, now Tuskegee University. He believed African Americans could achieve equality by bettering their educational and economic situation, but his goal was not to fight the Jim Crow laws. He did not speak out against segregation but encouraged African Americans to elevate themselves within their own communities.

### W. E. B. Du Bois

In contrast to Washington, Du Bois spoke against the idea of separate but equal. He **advocated** not only economic equality, as Washington did, but also the political and civic equality of African Americans. Without this equality, he believed the education that Washington so valued meant nothing. To this aim, he was a cofounder of the Niagara Movement, which became the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1909.

### Ida B. Wells

Born into slavery like Washington, Wells believed in standing up for the rights of African Americans. She was a vocal advocate of equality for all and bought a Memphis newspaper, which she named *Free Speech*, in order to promote her views. When three of her friends were lynched by a mob, she turned her attention to lynching in particular. A mob angry about her outspoken views ran her out of town. But she did not give up and spent her life working to turn popular opinion and federal laws against lynching.

### Marcus Garvey

An immigrant from Jamaica, Marcus Garvey also encouraged his fellow African Americans to develop racial pride and self-reliance. However, while Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. DuBois urged African Americans to improve the present system, Garvey advocated complete separation of the races. He promoted the idea of an African homeland for African Americans. Although Garvey was imprisoned for mail fraud, his nationalist and separatist ideas lived on after him.

**Check for Understanding** Though the beliefs and methods of Washington, Du Bois, Wells, and Garvey differed in many ways, how were they similar?