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University of Saida, Dr Moulay Taher
Faculty of Letters, Languages and Arts
Department of Literature and, English Language



Black Americans in USA: The Struggle for Equality 1861-1968

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Literature and Civilization.

Submitted by:

Miss. Linda BENAÏSSA

Supervised by:

Dr. Z. SELMI

Board of Examiners

Dr. Mokhtaria RAHMANI (MCB)	Chair Person	University of Saida
Dr. Zakaria SELMI(MCB)	Supervisor	University of Saida
Dr. Rebiha RAOUTI(MCA)	Examiner	University of Saida

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution.

Date:

Name: Linda BENAISSA

Signature:.....

Dedication

It is with genuine gratitude and warm regard that I dedicate this humble work to God Almighty my creator, my source of inspiration, patience, and strength. Only with His blessing have I soared. I also dedicate it to my dear parents, sisters and brothers, especially Nadjib who has always supported me, and whose good example has taught me to work hard for the things I aspire to achieve.

To my beloved nieces Melissa and Celine.

Finally, to my late aunt Nadia, may her soul rest in peace.

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Abstract

Africans were initially brought to America as slaves, their labor offered effective economic development, particularly in the south until it became indispensable. After the abolition of the institution of slavery, black Americans were exploited once again by racist white Americans. Black life experienced enormous volatility throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Thereupon, the chief aim of this dissertation is to unfold the truth behind blacks' oppression and subjugation before and after their emancipation. The research also endeavors to put forward the pivotal events that marked the struggle for equality in the United States. Hence the study is conducted in the light of the historical approach, relying on the analysis of various African American books in order to answer the main questions of this dissertation. Through the use of largely recorded sources, this study will contribute to future research on similar issues.

Keywords: Black Americans, emancipation, equality, racist, struggle, subjugation, United States

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List of Abbreviations, and Acronyms

CCC: Civilian Conservation Corps

CCCO: Coordinating Council of Community Organizations

CORE: Congress of Racial Equality

FEPC: Fair Employment Practices Committee

K.K.K: Ku Klux Klan

MIA: Montgomery Improvement Association

MOWM: March on Washington Movement

NAACP: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

SCLC: Southern Christian Leadership Conference

SNCC: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

US: United States

WWII: World War Two

General Introduction

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Ever since the Africans were brought to the new found land "America" during the period between the 17th and 18th centuries, their suffering began. Not only separated from their families, their culture, and their heritage, they were exploited and became slaves. The enslavement of African Americans started since the founding of the United States as the legal institution of human chattel slavery, and existed until the coming of the Civil War when President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Then, the adoption of the Thirteenth Amendment officially abolished slavery in 1865 after nearly 250 years of existence.

About four million enslaved people were freed; however, the tragedy did not end there. The Reconstruction era (1865_1877) brought the biggest disappointment and frustration for blacks, with the holocaust of war and the disorganization of industry, things only got worse. The newly freedmen became the outcast; landless and jobless, they experienced bigotry and coercion. They lacked all essential rights and even the adequate basics of life, although the Fourteenth Amendment (1868) and Fifteenth Amendment (1870) granted more citizenship rights to them. Moreover, whites implemented a social system with rules which became known as "the Black Codes", monitoring and subduing blacks, as well as ensuring their availability as a labor force. Furthermore, the codes emboldened whites to assault the nonconforming free blacks through sexual exploitation, false accusations, and atrocious torture. Their exploitation and oppression remained deeply ingrained in the American society even after the ending of Black Codes in 1866. Nonetheless, African Americans responded by attempting to create opportunities for themselves either politically, economically or educationally.

This topic is of a great interest since it marks a significant chapter in the history of black Americans in particular and the American people in general. The primary basic of this study is exploring how blacks coped with racial oppression and degradation and explain why, regardless of their age or gender, sought freedom as well as equal rights so much that they were willing to die for their cause. Considering these facts, this research aims to reveal the different obstacles African Americans faced after slavery ended, and elucidate how they coped with the struggles and overcame the challenges. Equally important, the objective of this work is to identify the various attempts of the black community in order to substantiate equality.

General introduction

- The main research questions this study seeks to solve are put forward as follows:
 - How was the white supremacy implemented in the American society?
 - In which ways did African American direct their efforts to achieve equality?
- In order to find answers to the preceding questions, the following research hypotheses are provided:
 - It is hypothesized that the existence and enforcement of white supremacy in America was through economic, political and legal discrimination. It might also be reflected in the different areas of everyday life like transportation, education, and employment in order to intimidate, humiliate and marginalize African Americans.
 - Black Americans might have directed their efforts towards political issues through civil disobedience, movements, and protests. Moreover, the efforts could also be in form of intellectual resistance and the founding of several associations and organizations.
 - Since the events of this historical period date back to more than a century, the approach to be used in this study will be the historical approach. Depending on analysis of books and recorded data, the credibility of the presented hypotheses will be either refuted or proved.

In fact, this work is going to be divided into three chapters. The first one will be an introductory chapter, delivering a historical background tackling the history and the continuous suffering and black Americans' struggle from slavery to their living conditions after their emancipation.

The second chapter will explore the various strategies white Americans employed to subjugate black, through a variety of sources. Concerning the last chapter, it will be exclusively devoted to the analysis of the many approaches African Americans used in their fight against racial discrimination and social injustice, as well as the inclusion of the long years of struggle results. The impossibility of conducting field work in America, the level of access to literature and the time constraints were a major handicap to this research.

Chapter One:

Black Life before and after Emancipation

1.1. Introduction

The journey of African people in America began with one of the most regrettable of all human endeavors along history; the institution of slavery. In 1619, the first enslaved Africans arrived in the US. Soon after, millions of blacks were brought and transported in the cruel journey known as “The Middle Passage”¹. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century tensions grew between slavery supporters and abolitionists, this tension ended up in a war between the newly formed confederacy, and the union. The conflict became known as the civil war and it was one of the bloodiest periods in American history. From the time they were brought to the emancipation proclamation, instead of acting, blacks were acted upon. Enslaved people were treated cruelly; they were long denied a rightful share in the economic, social, and political progress of the United States. During slavery there were whites of various social, political, and economic backgrounds who gained a great amount of wealth for owning slaves or performing some activities connected with the institution of slavery; slaves’ ownership was used as a sign of affluence. After the abolition of slavery, Reconstruction began and lasted until the dawn of Jim Crow in the 1890s. Before the establishment of these segregating laws, there was a short period of time when freed African Americans gained some economic, social, and political status.

The chief aim of this chapter will be providing a historical background which will deliver a representation of African American life, struggle, and suffering during the different stages of the American history; from slavery until the reconstruction era.

1.2. Slavery in America

Slavery means the condition in which individuals are owned and exploited by others who have supreme control and authority over their life, it is an institution of power designed to create advantages and profits for slaveholders. Its distinctive characteristics include the idea that a slave is a human being classed as a property; that he or she is an outsider, or a foreigner with no legal protection. That coercion can be used at will; that their work is at the complete disposal of a master. In the other side, rather than an economic system; Orlando Patterson in his book “Slavery and Social Death” (1982) considered slavery as a concept of socio-political relationships and power dynamics in

¹ The middle passage refers to the forceful movement of enslaved Africans across the Atlantic Ocean to the New World, and it is one of the triangular trade route between Europe and Africa.

human societies. In general, slavery was not born racial as some kind of original sin; it was made so by people in historical time and it has existed in all cultures and in all times. Moreover, slavery has always been evolving in conditions and situations of an abundance of land or resources, and a scarcity and, therefore, demands for labor.

Slavery in America was a unique experience in human history. It started when the first Africans were brought to the North British American colonies in 1619, as a cheap labor to help in the vast plantations. They worked in the production of tobacco crops and later cotton; this set the start of the slave trade. In 1793, the invention of the cotton gin resulted in the increased demand for this product in Europe which led to a huge need of slaves to work in the cotton plantations in the south. It is important to note that not all Africans in America were slaves, for those who were free, discriminatory laws were forced on them which held them back from full equality in the United State. Moreover, the life of African slaves was atrociously difficult; they lacked both social and psychic freedom, the harsh restrictions of slave codes controlled their actions and behaviors, they were stripped from their names and identities, tortured and lynched by their white masters. African American women whether free or enslaved suffered the most, they were denied from their rights, voices, and their whole existence was nothing more than a sexual property. The writer Harriet Ann Jacobs, who used to be a slave herself and then escaped captivity, expressed in her book “Incidents in the life of a slave girl” the traumatic experiences of black women; how they were degraded and maltreated in the American society (2001).

Later on, slaves initiated resistance against their masters through several ways. The issue of slavery and the status of Africans eroded relations between north and south since the independence of America and until the election of Abraham Lincoln to the presidency in 1860. Additionally, in the late 18th century, the antislavery movements began in the north to free the slaves and give them their right as human beings. Furthermore, the northern states intent was to end slavery in America, whereas the southern states strongly objected the abolition because their economy depended on the institution of slavery. Eventually, debates over the institution of slavery became more divisive issues, and it resulted in the bloodiest American Civil War (1861-1865) that came to put an end to slavery.

1.2.1. Slave Codes in US

In the institution of slavery, slave codes were a kind of social control with a set of rules regarding the enslaved Africans not as people but as a property. The slave owners established the codes and amplified them with laws in order to protect themselves and their properties from slave violence due to the increasing number of black slaves in colonial America which created prejudices and dread among the general population.

Virginia was the first of the 13 colonies to adopt such regulations. The slave codes were constantly modified so as to adapt to new needs, in addition, they varied from one colony or state to another but most made bondage a lifelong condition and ensured that all descendants of slaves would be slaves as well. There were numerous restrictions to enforce social control: slaves could not be away from their owner's premises without permission; they could not meet without the presence of a white person, they could not own firearms; they could not be taught, they were not even permitted to marry legally. Moving on, there was diversity in slave codes enforcement. For instance, slaves were granted some freedom by their white masters during times of peace. In the other hand, when there were times of agitation, the codes were enforced by slave patrols which helped in assisting slave owners and checked for slave's runaways, as well as slave hunters who were rewarded by capturing the slaves on the run ("Slavery in the British colonies", n.d.).

There was also a variety of ways in which obedience to the codes was obtained. Branding, whipping and incarceration were some of the punishments that were usually employed. Meanwhile, slaves committing violence against whites were often killed. Besides, slaves did not have that many legal rights: in court their testimony was inadmissible in any litigation involving whites; they could make no contract, nor could they own property. The slave codes were forerunners of the discriminatory laws known as the black codes of the reconstruction period.

1.2.2. Slaves Life

Prior to the civil war, many abolitionists sought slave stories solely for promoting antislavery movements. They gathered information from runaway slaves and published their stories to gain support and put forward their agenda. What was clear from the stories was that slaves' life varied greatly; blacks were enslaved both on small farms and large

plantations, in cities and towns, inside homes or out in the fields, and in industry and transportation. Generally, black men were employed as the bulk of the unskilled labor force otherwise they became cooks, boatmen, and house servants. Some enslaved women were used as cooks and laundresses. In the other hand some slaves, both men and women, benefited from their useful skills which they brought with them as they had been skilled artisans in Africa such as carpenters, basket manufacturers, blacksmiths, fishermen, miners, and potters.

The majority of slaves in the south lived and worked on cotton plantations. Although it was by far the leading crop, slaves grew also rice, corn, sugarcane, and tobacco. They also had to clear lands, dig ditches, make repairs, cut and haul wood, and slaughter livestock. Working in fields meant working from sunrise to sunset, some owners made their slaves work every day, and others allowed slaves one day a month off while some allowed their slaves to rest on Sundays. Some slaves worked as household butlers, and maids, providing services for the master's family or serving in smaller houses on a more individualized basis and they were referred to as "house servants" or "domestic slaves". They lived in better quarters and were fed better; they also could travel sometimes with the owner's family which led to a development of a class system within slaves. Furthermore, slaves housing varied according to the location and labor. For instance, plantation slaves lived in small dirty shacks with little or no furniture at all while domestic slaves lived around their master's residence, but they had far less privacy. Moreover, slaves' food was inadequate and unsatisfactory in comparison to the heavy workload.

Other bad conditions which slaves had to endure were unsanitary conditions and health problems as some lived in squalor making them vulnerable to diseases. For those who were not given any medical treatment relied on folk medicine. Another unfavorable condition was the threat of being sold away and separated from one's own family as well as the threat of sexual exploitation for women. Besides, brutal punishments, psychological abuse and endless hours of work drove many slaves to risk their lives in attempt to flee. They were punished for the slightest offense, real or imagined. The punishments took many forms, including whippings, branding, mutilation, and imprisonment, while rapists and murderers were sentenced to be burned alive. However, many slaves resisted their treatment in different ways such as slowing down their work pace, disabling machinery,

feigning illness, or destroying crops. Some slaves had even committed suicide, mutilated themselves to reduce their property value or escaped to the north.

1.2.3. The Abolitionist Movement

The early abolitionist movement which appeared in the American scene was galvanized by both slaves' efforts to liberate themselves and by groups of white settlers, such as the Quakers², who opposed slavery on religious or moral grounds, arguing that it broke the idea of equality among people. Moreover, in 1790 they appealed Congress to abolish slavery. In the same vein, the movement came as a wave of reforms in the northern states with the belief that slavery was a national sin; a despicable affliction on the US, abolitionists considered eradicating it by freeing the slaves was the moral obligation of every American. However, many people disagreed; a lot of Americans both northern and southern did not tolerate abolitionist goals due to the belief that the abolition would create economic instability and endanger the racial social order. While public opinion differed and various branches of the abolitionist movement did not concord on how to attain their goals, abolitionists obtained enough persuasiveness thanks to their common belief in individual liberty. Through years of strife, blacks, whites and natives put their lives on the line, united forces as antislavery activists and pushed for justice despite potent disapproval. At last, their efforts forced the issue of slavery to the forefront of national politics, provoking the split between the north and south that led to the civil war.

The first leaders of the movement during 1830s and 1870s imitated some of the British techniques used for ending slavery in Great Britain in the 1830s. At first, they sent petitions to Congress ran for political office and spread anti-slavery writings among southerners. However, as time passed, some abolitionists became more radical and extremist. Militant abolitionists struck with excessive and deadly tactics for they thought violence was the ultimate way and started inciting violent insurrections. Besides, many Americans worked tirelessly and strived to support the movement. Some of the most famous abolitionists included: Frederick Douglass a former slave, he was a lecturer, writer, editor and a recruiter for the United States Colored Troops. He believed in political activism and was a critical voice of black leadership during the Civil War and

² Quakers: Members of the Religious Society of Friends also referred to as the Quaker movement which was created in the 17th century by George Fox. The early Quakers were persecuted for their beliefs that the presence of God existed in every person. They were known for the rejection of ritual and formal creed, an ordained ministry and believed in equality for all men and women.

Reconstruction. Another was William Still, an African abolitionist, writer, historian and civil rights activist. He became a chairman of an organized committee aiding runaway slaves. One of the most influential abolitionists of the 1830s was William Lloyd Garrison, who used the press to spread the abolitionist message. Additionally, on January 1, 1831, he published the first issue of his abolitionist journal "The Liberator" he wrote: "I am in earnest, I will not equivocate, I will not excuse, I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard" (Brennan, 1945, p. 153). Garrison was also one of the principal organizers of the American Anti-Slavery Society, founded in Philadelphia in 1833.

As the power struggle between the north and the south reached its peak the Civil War broke out in 1861. Such insistent abolitionist demands, supported by radical republicans in Congress pushed President Lincoln, who opposed slavery, in his decision to issue the emancipation proclamation. While the emancipation proclamation freed southern slaves as a war measure, abolitionists were concerned that it had not made slavery officially illegal in all the states. Finally, the thirteenth amendment was enacted on December 18, 1865, when a legal end to slavery in all states was brought and the 1870 passage of the fifteenth amendment, which gave suffrage to the blacks. Abolitionist movement then dissolved.

1.3. The American Civil War

The fate of enslaved people in the US would divide the nation; the United States split into two sections: south and north. Southerners benefited greatly from slave institution since they focused on agriculture and their economy depended mainly on slave labor. Unlike the south, the north was well developed and wealthy; they relied on manufactures and did not need slaves. The division therefore erupted into a large-scale conflict known as the Civil War or the War Between the States. It was one of America's greatest tragedies and bloodiest conflicts. For four years between 1861 and 1865, the US was engaged in the civil war. It shifted through several wars between the two parts: the union of the northern states and the confederacy of the southern states. According to the historian James Rhodes in his interpretation of the causes of the war; the principal reason was the historic event of slavery and the fight between slave and non-slave states advocates. Some of the other contributing factors were social and economic differences as the north turned into an industrial and commercial state while the south was utterly based on agriculture (1913).

However, southerners did not think that the federal government had the right to tell them if they could own a slave; they believed that it depended on the people to decide for themselves. Later on, with the nomination of Abraham Lincoln, southerners appealed for an immediate secession, and they decided to split from the union as they formed their own confederate states of America under the presidency of Jefferson Davis. Between 1861 and 1862 the union army was weak. As the nation approached its third year of bloody civil war, President Abraham Lincoln issued the emancipation proclamation; one of the most important acts in the American history. The president ratified the constitutional act on January 1, 1863 and announced that he hoped to keep the union as one nation under the proposition that all men were created equal.

Even though the emancipation did not free all slaves but it allowed them to run out to the north and enabled them to join the union army. As a result, the enslaved people became a dynamic contributor in the army and granted dominance of the Union in the war. Blacks became more than slaves, many became productive citizens such as congressmen, governors, businessmen, merchants and journalists. Moreover, during the war the north had many advantages over the south; they had better transportation network, more manpower and more war materials. Thereafter, the confederate army kept losing then surrendered to mark the end of the war.

The Civil War was one of the most decisive periods in the American history. It terminated the long wars between the two opponents. The confederates did not realize their goal in what would be termed an independent confederacy; instead, they lost all wars for the union, joined the newly reunified country and were forced to free all slaves.

1.3.1. Emancipation Proclamation

Following the outbreak of the Civil War, abolitionists thought that releasing the slaves in the south would aid the union victory, as enslaved productive work was critical to the confederate war efforts; southern states used slaves for the reinforcement of their armies on the field and to manage the home front so more men could go off to fight. Likewise, President Abraham Lincoln was also attempting to obtain the Border States³ agreement on gradual emancipation, involving recompense to enslavers, with little success. The president

³ In the context of the Civil War, the Border States were slave states that did not secede from the union: Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri.

had unfortunately faced political tension on all sides: from blacks fleeing bondage⁴, from Union generals operating autonomously and from unionists who opposed emancipation. When abolitionists chastised him for not pursuing a more aggressive emancipation policy, his answer was that saving the union was his first priority.

In the meantime, the president cabinet was deeply in thought over the document that would become the emancipation proclamation. Lincoln had written a draft in late July, and while some of his advisers supported it, others were anxious and apathetic that it was too radical. William H. Seward, Lincoln's secretary, advised him to wait for the emancipation announcement until the union significant victory on the battlefield, without it, the proclamation would only appear as a meaningless act of an embattled government. In the battle of Antietam, union troops halted the advance of confederate forces near Sharpsburg, Maryland on September 17, 1862. Five days later, Abraham Lincoln went public with the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation calling on all confederate states to rejoin the union within 100 days; otherwise all persons held in bondage would be declared free. When the confederacy did not yield, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st 1863, which had no mention about gradual emancipation which Lincoln had previously supported. Emancipation was justified by the president as a wartime measure, and he made sure to apply it solely to the confederate states that were rebelling at that moment. The four border slave states and all or parts of three confederate states controlled by the union army were excepted from the emancipation implying that when Lincoln signed the formal proclamation, he did not truly free all of the enslaved people in the US. Lincoln was careful to stay inside the bounds of his authority as his decree did not apply to the Border States that remained loyal to the union.

The proclamation marked a crucial shift in Lincoln's views on slavery despite the fact that it was presented chiefly as a wartime measure. It had enormous symbolic power, as it declared freedom for enslaved people as one of the north legitimate war goals, alongside preserving the union itself; it cracked open the institution of slavery, it redefined and the course of the war from a struggle to preserve the Union to a fight for slaves freedom. The emancipation had also set a firm agenda for how the nation would be reshaped after that historic conflict. Finally, emancipation paved the way for the permanent abolition of slavery in the US, as well as preparing citizens to campaign for it and accept it. As soon as

⁴ Bondage means the practice of slavery and the state of lacking freedom.

Lincoln and his Congressional allies realized emancipation would have no constitutional basis once the war finished, they set out to enact a constitutional amendment ending slavery. Both houses of congress had passed the Thirteenth Amendment by the end of January 1865, and it was ratified on December 6th, 1865 bringing an end to slavery in the United States.

1.3.2. Black Military

After the war started, Lincoln and Jefferson, president of the confederacy, called for volunteers and men willing to fight for their country soon occupied the ranks. Shortly after the beginning of the war, both sides came to realize that the number of volunteers was insufficient leaving both sides seeking to fill their shortages. They were both hesitant whether or not to allow blacks to fight, additionally, there was a federal law which dated back to 1792 that prevented blacks from joining the US army. However, on July 17, 1862, congress passed the Confiscation and Militia Act. Five days later, President Lincoln presented the preliminary draft of the Emancipation Proclamation to his cabinet which allowed blacks to join the federal troops as soldiers. From then on, black recruits were pursued and the Bureau of Colored Troops⁵ was established by the War Department in 1863.

Many white soldiers and officers believed blacks lacked the quality and ability to fight. However, in 1862, African American soldiers of the 1st Kansas Colored Volunteers suppressed criticism when they repulsed confederates at the battle of Island Mound, Missouri. By August, 1863, “Negro regiments” were in the field and ready for service. Black soldiers served in artillery, navy and infantry as well as sustaining the army with noncombat support such as: guards, cooks, spies, and teamsters. Black women could not formally join the army; nonetheless, they served as spies, nurses and scouts. One of the most famous, who scouted for the 2nd South Carolina Volunteers, was Harriet Tubman. Despite proving themselves as good soldiers, there were still several means of inequality experienced by the black regiments⁶: clothing, feeding, and sheltering soldiers were difficult at best, as well as discrimination in other areas which remained widespread. Nevertheless, they endured the unequal treatment, violence, and massacres while bravely

⁵ The bureau was created to handle all matters related to the organization of colored units, headed by Major Charles W. Foster

⁶ Black regiments or Negro regiments were organized and formed army colored units smaller than a division.

fighting in a country that restricted their rights since the beginning only to realize freedom and equality.

By the end of the Civil War, many blacks were enlisted in the army as many wanted to prove their manhood and their equality to the whites and many fought for the freedom of their people. As a result, several blacks who enrolled in the military lost their lives during the civil war. After the war ended some black soldiers were awarded the Medal of Honor for their heroism like William H. Carney who was the first African American to receive the congressional award.

1.4. Reconstruction

The south was badly destroyed after the end of war, the southern landscape had been completely transformed: half the population was decimated and half emancipated, the stock was crashed and lands were decayed. As a result, an inclusive process took place in order to rebuild the ruined south which was called the Reconstruction that lasted from 1865 to 1877. The south was mainly wrought by the institution of slavery so it had to be rebuilt from its foundations. The new south which came to be known in the following century was shaped by the Reconstruction which established some of its infrastructure, institutions and processes of economic growth. People struggled earnestly to build a nation of free and equal citizens, therefore, steps were taken to adopt a progressive legislation that puts forward the newly freed slaves and equally integrate them into society as well as bringing the 11 states that had seceded back into the United States.

The US faced additional challenges such as the transition in the south from chattel slavery to free labor contracts. Thereafter, the US government assisted blacks through an agency called the Freedmen's Bureau, formally known as the Bureau of Refugees. It was established in 1865 by Congress to help millions of former black slaves in the south; the bureau was at the heart of congressional reconstruction and directed the campaign in trying to bring about images of justice and equality for the newly freed slaves. The bureau provided food, housing and legal assistance, it also attempted to settle former slaves on land confiscated or abandoned during the war. However, it was prevented from fully carrying out its programs due to a shortage of funds along with the politics of race and reconstruction. After the assassination of Lincoln in 1865, vice president Andrew Johnson assumed presidency. However, African Americans dream of equality seemed to vanish as

Johnson returned all the lands to their owners instead of giving them to the ex-slaves as promised. Moreover, he did not have the intention to stop white landowners from exploiting once again the blacks (Varon, 2016). Furthermore, a series of cruel laws known as the black codes were enacted in most southern states in attempt to return black Americans to a state of subordination and dependency and ensure their availability as a labor force.

Once black men were able to vote when the Fifteenth Amendment was approved in 1870, they tirelessly mobilized to elect members of their own communities to public office. From 1869 until the end of the century few black men were elected to the US congress. However, their presence in government did not last long because of resistance among many whites and discrimination in the voting process. In addition, women would not win the right to vote until 1920 and a black woman in particular would not be elected to congress until 1969, a full century after the election of the first black man.

1.4.1. Reconstruction Amendments

An amendment is basically a formal alter, revision, expansion or correction of certain principles. It comes in numerous assortments and it includes the method of altering something through either parliamentary or constitutional procedure. In the United States, this term is regularly used particularly of a change to the US Constitution. A constitutional amendment may be proposed by congress with a two-thirds majority vote in both the Senate and the House of Representatives.

After the Civil War, three major amendments were passed: the Thirteenth Amendment, approved in 1865, ended slavery in the US; whites were no longer allowed to own slaves, execute, imprison or take away their properties without a legal process. It is noteworthy for definitively ending slavery and for giving the US government power to enforce abolition. The states could no longer pass laws permitting and regulating human bondage. The amendment prohibited slavery and involuntary servitude except as a punishment for crime. However, it led to some doubtful questions; did the exception for convicted criminals mean that such people could, in fact, be bought and sold and forced to work for no pay? Did race based discrimination and humiliations also became illegal? These questions made the nation struggle to sort out (Vorenberg, 2001).

Ratified in 1868, the Fourteenth Amendment granted citizenship. In this amendment, republicans proclaimed that all persons born or naturalized in the US were American citizens, explicitly overturning the previous decision holding that African Americans were not and could never be American citizens. This amendment was made to allow every person who was born in America or who had become an American citizen to have the same rights as any other citizen. Moreover, it gave the federal government the authority to protect freedmen rights in the different states; it established the idea that all citizens were entitled to equal protection and privileges under the law.

Finally, the Fifteenth Amendment, approved in 1870, gave black men the right to vote. It stated that no citizen can be denied the right to vote because of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. The ratification of the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth amendments brought hope of the newly-freed slaves. People believed this would be the start of justice and equality; amendments had indeed a critical importance in laying the foundation for a more equal life. However, the establishment of Jim Crow Laws in the south prevented that. In general, Reconstruction period consisted of many changes, goals and accomplishments. Amendments were made to improve the lives of black Americans and grant them equal rights just like white citizens. While the intention of the lawmakers was good, the amendments succumbed due to the power and the feelings of former slave masters and their potential to affect the law's enforcement.

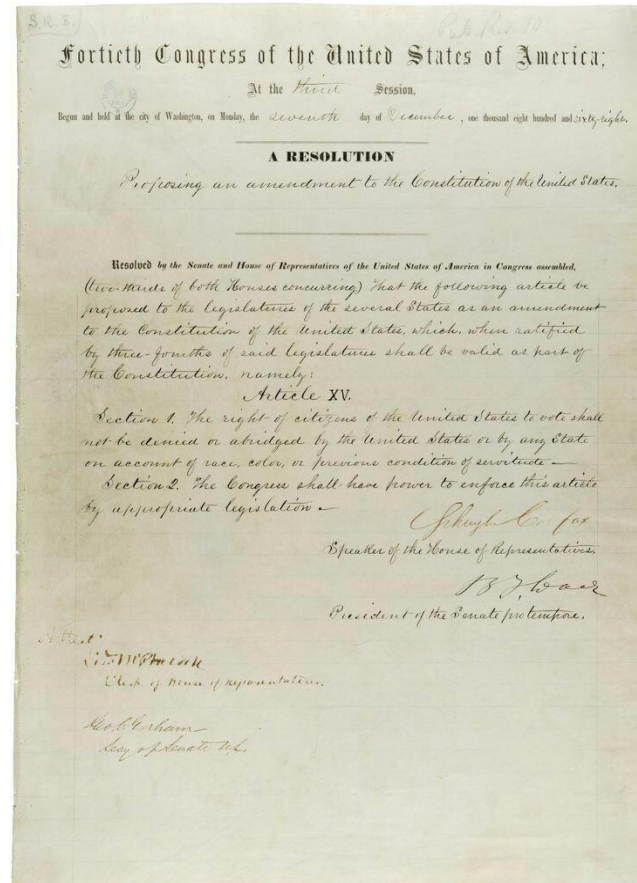


Figure.1. The Fifteenth Amendment in the National Archives (Adapted from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fifteenth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution#/media/File:15th_Amendment_Pg1of1_AC.jpg)

1.4.2. Black Towns

Historically African American municipalities, also known as freedmen's town, freedom towns, black colonies or all-Black towns, were established by or for a preponderantly black population. The majority of these municipalities founded and populated by freed slaves both during the period of slavery or after its abolition in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Black Americans escaped from the white's oppression, racism and other prejudices and found shelters in these black towns all across the Midwest and the south. The African American W. E. B. Du Bois says:

I believe in liberty for all men: the space to stretch their arms and their souls; the right to breath and the right to vote, the freedom to choose their friends, enjoy the sunshine, and ride on the railroads, uncursed by color; thinking, dreaming, working as they will in a kingdom of beauty and love. (Du Bois, 1920, p. 4)

For blacks, these towns portray a peculiar phase in their history. At the war's end, enslaved people with dreams and expectations of freedom suddenly faced desolate options. Many were concerned about housing, accommodation and survival. Therefore, some of the freed people attempted to band together for buying land and establishing all black towns across the country. Soon after, many, regardless of gender and age, joined forces to create, occupy, and govern their own communities. Between 1865 and 1920, they created a number of distinct settlements, some of which survived into the twenty-first century.

With clear and determined political and economic motives, black towns, either mostly or entirely black incorporated, self directed communities with commercially oriented economies were created. Their founders such as Nicodemus, Kansas; Boleyn, Oklahoma and Mound Bayou, Mississippi and other, hoped for profits from the business and incited early settlers with the promise of rising real estate values. Moreover, other temptations lured them such as fleeing the subjection and demonstrating their ability for self-government. However, Jim Crow laws and white distrust stifled the growth of these towns through limiting further settlement and forcing blacks into mixed but racially segregated communities.

1.5. Fate of the Freedmen

Freed people faced new difficulties: finding a way to forge an economically independent life in the face of hostile whites, and little or no education since prior to the war, southern state governments had barred slaves from reading and writing. As the vast majority of southern blacks had been slaves until the civil war, a high rate of illiteracy in the south was marked. Yet there were few who had been free before the war and had gained some literacy skills, holding, and associations with some influential whites. Therefore, these freedmen became a crucial pillar of southern black life; also, they often played leading roles in black communities. During the post civil war era, the freed people started operating the racial uplift with family relationships and thriving further into black churches, education and establishment of community organizations and institution.

The first things blacks did were to seek education and find the missed family members they lost due to slave trade. Moreover, proper patriarchal relations in newly freed slaves' families were imparted gradually through legal marriages. Independent black churches were the backbone of black life. They were the centerpieces of black culture and community, not only as places of personal spiritual renewal and communal worship but also as centers for learning, socializing, and political organization away from the undesired white disturbance. They also represented the shelter of the homeless and the relief of the poor. Nonetheless, things were not that easy, two of the postwar changes overshadowed southern life. One was the bewildering new world faced by the freedmen. For instance, many blacks lived in desperate rural poverty across the south, and even though black women often preferred to be homemakers, poverty pushed them into the workforce. The other change was a new farming practice known as sharecropping which made life hard for both blacks and poor whites. Thereafter, among agrarian white southerners a heavy dissatisfaction was growing which became a threat to the racial unity that supremacist democrats were diligent about.

It is important to highlight that after the Civil War; most of the freedmen became republicans. From 1868 onward, they started electing African American men to office. Furthermore, republican state governments acquired policies which democrats had long defied. They raised taxes on large landholdings and passed laws by which debtors were more privileged than creditors. African Americans enjoyed a period when they were

allowed to vote, to be politically involved, to search for occupation, and use public accommodations. In the other hand, opponents of this progress soon rallied against former slaves' freedom and began trying to come upon ways for reaping the gains for which many had shed tears and blood.

1.5.1. Education

The nineteenth century was an important period for black education. The beginning of the century saw little to no schooling available to blacks and in the end there was the assimilation of public schools; after the war ended, there were still strong undercurrents of conflicts. Power and the formation of a new social order were at the heart of these conflicts, as education was an important factor in defining the social order, freed people believed it would aid with individual development, racial uplift, and provide them with the necessary skills that would make them informed citizens (Anderson, 1988). Prior to the war, most of the southern states generally denied or restricted slaves' access to education in an effort to maintain the institution of slavery. Some learnt secretly, however, the vast majority had had no opportunities to learn at all. Education, therefore, became a symbol of freedom for African Americans in the former slave-holding states, as it offered them the tools whereby they could combat the racism that had oppressed them for centuries and it was also critical to their survival, equality and prosperity in the American society.

Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, educating blacks was not a priority of the white majority in the US. They first gained access to education in schools established during the war, when the blacks, refugees and soldiers, were taught at various camps and places of refuge at their own pressing request. So the first real impulse for black education emerged from the army and then it spread rapidly as the war was coming to a close. Prior to the 1860s the vast majority of the south had only a rudimentary public school system. Following the Civil War, southern states established a dual educational system based on race. The reasoning was that, while there was segregation, blacks were still given equal opportunities. These separate schools were far from equal, white schools received more government funding. Moreover, there were fewer public schools for blacks. If a town did not have enough money for two separate schools, then only one school for white children was built.

Nonetheless, the dedication of black teachers and parents to education never wavered. They faced remarkable obstacles in their efforts to create public schools. The dearth of qualified teachers was one of the issues. Local blacks who could already read and write shared their knowledge during the early years of post war era. However, due to the low number of literate blacks in the former slaveholding states, there were insufficient local teachers. Furthermore, black schools were overcrowded with excessive number of students per teacher who received small pay. Fortunately they received financial assistance from Freedmen's Bureau, white charities, and missionary societies. African Americans were also vigilant in their efforts, many desperately poor, dug deep into their own resources to hire teachers, rent, build and maintain black schools. These new resources were used to great success as schools grew quickly, new schools were constructed in a variety of areas, and the quality and curriculum of the schools were improved. The freedmen's education movement was another crucial feature; it generated a range of educational institutions ranging from small classes designed for early learners to institutions of higher education meant for the training of professionals. Soon after, the founding of the nation's first black colleges happened such as Fisk University and Howard University.

1.5.2. Sharecropping

In the post war era, freed people sought employment since the federal government took little concrete action to assist them in quest to own lands. For whites the abolition of slavery meant the abolition of the plantation system in the south. The sharecropping arrangement arose then to meet the need of white landowners of labor for plantations, as well as the needs of poor people, especially freed slaves, for economic survival. Instead of working for landlords, most freedmen preferred to lease land for a set fee. Rather than paying rent in cash, they were asked to give a portion of the crop yield, called shares, back to the owner as a payment. In many cases, the landowners or merchants would rent tools and offer seed, fertilizer, and other items on credit until the harvest season. And if the harvest was bad, the sharecropper could end up indebted to the landowner. It was almost impossible to pay such debts so sharecropping often created situations where farmers were locked into a life of poverty. Sharecropping was often referred to as enslavement by another name, or debt bondage.

By the early 1870s, the sharecropping system dominated agriculture throughout southern lands. With the southern economy in disarray, it enabled white landowners to

reestablish a labor force. However, the system restricted the economic mobility of the laborers greatly and effectively created a new system of bondage leading to many conflicts. Generally, it condemned freed people to a life of poverty. Some blacks, however, saved enough money to get over sharecropping to renting or owning land. For those who could not, they went into debt and were forced to sign unjust and exploitative labor contracts which left them with no hope for an improvement. Moreover, over the course of several decades, sharecropping became detrimental for southern agriculture due to severe economic problems such as increased debts and the decline of cotton prices.

1.6. Reconstruction Failure

Reconstruction was one of the most pivotal periods of the American history. Following the union's victory in the Civil War, concerns arose about how to rebuild the south, protect and advance the civil, political, and economic rights of newly-freed slaves. Reconstruction was presented as a solution, and despite the fact that the reconstruction era impact is notable for several significant successes, its failure to achieve the original purposes cannot be denied.

Reconstruction in the United States failed for a variety of reasons. Failures in politics, economics and society resulted in the restoration of white supremacy and black subjugation. Reconstruction did not rebuild the southern economy as the south was a poor backwater dependent on agriculture. Moreover, because it failed to address racial issues and prejudices, there were no results with long lasting improvements in the opportunities available to former slaves, nor did it protect their newly acquired rights. Furthermore, reconstruction failure to alter the southern social structure and redistribute the region's wealth was due to the sharecropping system, the anti-black groups, segregation in schools, carpetbaggers⁷, in addition to some misleading statistics about black crime rates which resulted in the rapid growth of racism. White supremacists used violence to reverse black political gains after the Civil War and it seemed that both the federal government and President Johnson made no commitment to civil equality or a political role for the freedmen.

⁷ Carpetbaggers were immigrants from the northern to the southern states after the civil war, especially the ones who headed south with the mission of conquering and gaining political power. They were named so because they seemingly carried all their possessions in luggage known as carpetbag.

1.7. Conclusion

Before the abolition of slavery, slave labor offered effective means for wealth creation and economic development, particularly in the south until it became indispensable. Meanwhile, slaves had been continuously expressing their discontent with their situation. The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the development of a popular abolitionist movement challenging the legitimacy of slavery; this led to America's bloodiest conflict the civil war. Although the four years war brought an end to the repressive institution of slavery, there were few attempts to return to the slavery era. Many organizations which emerged then tried to intensify the racial segregation that would continue until the twentieth century. African American life knew enormous volatility, especially for black southerners, for approximately four decades. The post war era was indeed wearisome, complex, and oppressive, yet it cannot be denied that the African American life experienced some sort of development and modernization despite the slow process.

Chapter Two:

The Rise of White Supremacy

2.1. Introduction

For African Americans, the nineteenth century was a time of radical transformation in both the political and legal status. Despite these dramatic changes, however, many of the socioeconomic characteristics of African Americans at the end of the nineteenth century somehow remained the same as they used to be in the mid-1800s due to the establishment of white supremacy. During the reconstruction era, whites expanded an exhaustive social system with laws that became shortly known merely as the Black Codes as well as an enforcement of a system with laws and practices that resembled those of slavery known as Jim Crow laws. Nonetheless, throughout the twentieth century, black Americans started challenging the white supremacist patriarchy, redefining their social positions and asserting their humanity and political rights. However, they faced many obstructions such as legal difficulties, lack of political influence and powerful positions, in addition to the inner division within black community. Moreover, during the two world wars the African Americans were bloodily fighting abroad for their nation and were tirelessly fighting at home for their rights. All of these obstacles hindered African Americans from gaining equal civil rights up during the first half of the twentieth century.

In this regard, the second chapter will explore the different changes and the challenges of the African American's life during the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, the chapter will elucidate how black people circumvented the white supremacists and pushed through their equality agenda.

2.2. White Supremacy

White supremacy can be defined as a social construct reflecting the power relations that had shaped America's racial history. It had established the power dynamics between whites and people of color. The power to oppress, control, weaken, and destroy colored people was the ultimate aspect of the influence of white supremacy. Moreover, it was also used to serve as a social control mechanism; the inclusion or exclusion of people from the institutions and culture of the dominant society was based solely on their skin color.

The antebellum slaveholding south had hardly been a peaceful place. White southerners had little intention of admitting defeat or acquiescing and their refusal to abide by the law had profound consequences for the course of American history. For southern African Americans, life post slavery was undoubtedly hard and burdensome because of the white cruel racial prejudice which was used as an excuse to integrate the system of white supremacy. Southern states did not only prevent blacks from practicing their voting rights but also kept impoverishing them so that they would find no other way but to work for their former masters. During the hard times like the economy crisis, white planters found a new mean to survive by exploiting blacks. Thus, a labor war began in which the black Americans were forced to work under the whites own conditions; white planters led campaigns of violence to intimidate freedmen into submission and weaken their ability to negotiate the terms of their work and accommodations.

Southern whites wanted to impose white supremacy through violence and harassment. Blacks were attacked, raped, and in some cases, they were even murdered. One of the main motives was racial stereotypes, and their fear of blacks who reached political power and civil rights. While dreaming of equality, African American started expecting the same legal and civil activities as whites which offended them; this provoked whites' concerns about the economic system and about the entire social order. Supremacists were outraged by the ratification of the reconstruction amendments which granted former slaves citizenship rights; they were prone to attack blacks simply for acting free. Southern whites refused the new situation and began accusing blacks of violence and sexual transgression, which later gave rise to racial fears. Therefore, they struck with a variety of methods such as the organization of groups that put forward white dominance. These groups were often formed by upper-class southerners such as local judges, police officers, politicians, physicians, landowners, newspaper editors and doctors.

The rise of white supremacy resulted in enormous imbalances in the financial prosperity and property ownership, the voting rights, political power, in addition to the social benefits of leniency in the courts, social mobility, educational opportunities, and public deference. Things only got worse when a series of state laws were designed to disenfranchise blacks and segregate them were passed in the 1890s. As a result, southern blacks faced lynching, mobbing, and the denial of their newly acquired rights. The United States administrations did neither send troops for help, nor seek other options such as

arming the black community. Eventually, all the unfortunate events led to the collapse of reconstruction.

2.2.1. Semi-slavery

After the bloody war, southern states enacted discriminatory laws known as Black Codes to prevent people of color from achieving political and economic autonomy. The codes attempted to economically disable freedmen; forcing them to continue to work on plantations, and to remain subject to racial hierarchy within the southern society. The laws codified white supremacy and severely limited the economic rights and social mobility of newly freed people by barring them their newly acquired rights and restricting the civic participation; they deprived them of the right to vote, to serve on juries, hold office, own weapons, testify against white people and sometimes even the right to rent or lease land.

Moreover, they segregated schools and public facilities and restricted access to certain neighborhoods. As job opportunities were severely restricted, blacks were forced to work in low wages agricultural jobs. Equally important, children of those arrested for codes violations were usually taken and forced into servitude under the name of “apprenticeship”. Therefore, the codes became a threat which manipulated black people as cheap labor to rebuild the ruined Southern economy. The US Congress opposed black codes, at first, by enacting legislation and the amendments to the US Constitution. However, by the time of the so-called Compromise of 1877, the issue of blacks had deteriorated, as people lost interest in it. Even though Black Codes were the precursor of Jim Crow laws, they paved the way to the fateful move towards enshrining racial equality into the constitution.

2.2.2. Neoslavery

The term Neoslavery was used by the writer Douglass A. Blackmon to describe the blacks’ new living conditions which mirrored the slavery era after the coming of the segregation doctrine called Jim Crow laws. These laws were any state or local rules that imposed or legalized racial segregation. The laws would last for almost 100 years, from the post-Civil War era until around 1968, and their main goal was to legally marginalize black people and internalize the feeling of inferiority which was a powerful tool that kept blacks in oppressive situations. Despite the fact that the majority of whites in this era were

involved in the oppression and discrimination against African Americans, there were some whites who offered help, showed kindness, humanity and supported African Americans who often referred to them as “good whites”.

Whites used racial violence as a form of social control to implement the written customs of Jim Crow’s institution. The whites’ hatred and savagery led to an overwhelming sense of fear among black community that ultimately forced African Americans to submission; whites had a particular image of what their former slaves should act like in their presence and African Americans were socialized to realize what whites wanted and perform what they expected from them otherwise they would face dire consequences. They were also obliged to control their body movements, facial expressions, and most importantly eye contact which were considered as a challenge to white superiority. Moreover, the Separate Car Act of 1890 started an extended period of exclusion. In 1896 the Supreme Court case of *Homer Plessey*, an African American man, who refused to sit in the “colored” section on a train, was the landmark case that reinforced Jim Crow laws claiming that blacks and whites could be separate but equal while using the terms “colored” and “negro” when referring to them. Generally, the segregation practices affected every aspect of public life, becoming implemented in professional offices, schools, hospitals, jails, cemeteries, residential homes or neighborhoods, transportation, water fountains, cashier windows, and movie theaters. Further, the laws prohibited intermarriage, custody, and cohabitation. The laws also gave these same ordinary whites permission to force African Americans to work in their fields or go to jail (Litwack, 1998).

2.2.3. Ku Klux Klan

After the war finally ended in 1865, people thought that they finally achieved peace. However the south left the bloody war with much humiliation and despair as the biggest loser (Hohman, 1916). This hate led men and women in post war period to extremes of violence. The Ku Klux Klan was formed in Pulaski Tennessee in 1865. Since then, it provided a vehicle for the oppression of black people in America, and it was responsible for unimaginable atrocities.

The founders of the group wanted its name to be unique; unintentionally the singularity of the title became the major reason for the Klan earliest success and popularity. Its origin came from the Greek language; the word “kuklos” from which the

English words cycle and circle are derived. The word “clan” was selected next as it sounded well besides the previous one. The group, thus, settled with the infamous title Ku Klux Klan and the letters K.K.K as its initials. The Klan wanted to suppress the Republican forces in the south. At first, the K.K.K served the same purpose of controlling blacks as the slave patrols had. One of the Klan’s greatest strengths during this period was the large number of editors, ministers, former confederate officers and political leaders who hid behind its sheets and guided its actions. The K.K.K became an instrument of fear imposing a reign of terror and violence.

Later on, the ugly side of the group was unveiled as the mutilations and floggings, lynching and shootings, began to spread across the south in 1868 when the Klan name changed to The Invisible Empire of the South. If things could not get any worse, Klansmen started enforcing Jim Crow laws and promoting racial segregation in the south after the end of reconstruction period until the period of civil rights. This move led to a major black migration to northern states and pushed blacks and many white Americans who opposed blacks’ oppression to fight and end the inequalities problem.

2.2.4. White Man's League

On March 1, 1874 a group of confederate veterans in Louisiana formed the White League; a paramilitary⁸ racial terrorist group. The main purpose and objectives of this group were the restoration of white supremacy and the elimination of the Reconstruction government. These goals were achieved through targeting local Republican officeholders, using violence, terrorizing, lynching⁹ and assassinating blacks to prevent them from their voting rights, education, and any type of political activism. Moreover, this organization was unlike any other anti-blacks groups as the White League used to carry out frequently its functions openly and publicly.

However, it is necessary to highlight that these violent racial prejudices were not limited only to the Ku Klux Klan, White Man's League or any other white supremacist organization. Every year, people who had no ties to an organized group, but did partake their excessive hostility, these vigilante groups of three or more persons who were mainly

⁸ Paramilitary means a group of civilians organized in a military fashion; to operate and function like or to assist a military unit.

⁹ Lynching was a form of control which punished any violation, of the racial order. It was an American phenomenon and it was not simply a crime against an individual but an entire race.

concerned with maintaining order throughout an extrajudicial activities and in a savage manner, had consistently been responsible for several assaults, arsons, bombardments and assassinations.

The Reconstruction administrations were controversial amongst countless white southerners and mainly the elite “southern aristocracy” who refused to abide by the law and were continuously attempting for the prevention of black political involvement in any way they could. Moreover, against this campaign of terror, freedmen established and organized into their own paramilitary groups and fought to defend themselves. Despite being successful in the areas where they formed the vast majority, they needed outside assistance against the outgunned and better armed white paramilitary organizations elsewhere. The lack and limitations of the constitution was exposed when their requests for help remained unanswered. It is also believed that when the K.K.K, White League and other paramilitary organizations threatened and extinguished freed people and their white allies.

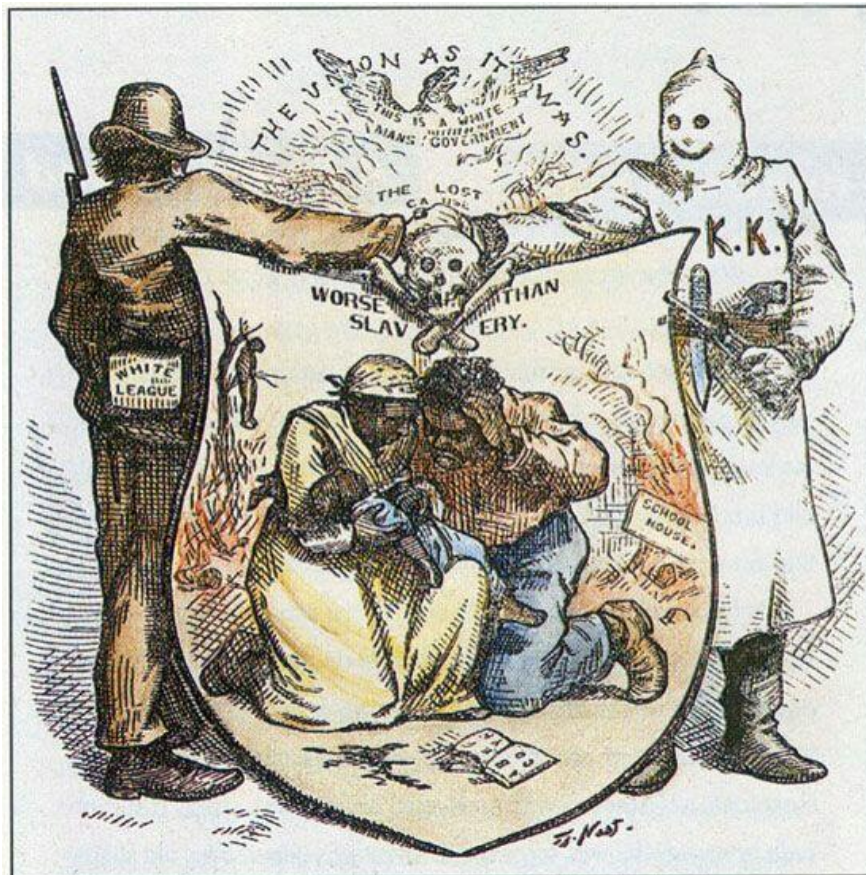


Figure.2. Thomas Nast, Worse than slavery.(Adapted from: [https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Worse_than_Slavery_\(1874\),_by_Thomas_Nast.jpg](https://commons.m.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Worse_than_Slavery_(1874),_by_Thomas_Nast.jpg))

2.3. The First World War

As the First World War ignited across Europe in 1914, black Americans took it as an opportunity and started to enlist in the American military in order to show their patriotism, gain the respect of the whites and hopefully improve their status and treatments in the American society. However, to their surprise, African Americans found themselves involved in protest against racial injustice both on home front against whites' supremacy and abroad as they served in segregated units while willing to sacrifice their lives for this nation.

Despite being qualified for many positions in the army, not many African Americans were given the opportunity to serve in combat units. The majority was restricted to labor battalions and the combat elements were kept completely segregated. However there was a backlash from the black community and the War Department eventually established two divisions in 1917, both of which were composed of black combat units. As a result of the formation of African American units, there was an increased need for black officers as the War Department reasoned that soldiers were more likely to obey men of their own color, which would lower the danger of rebellion. Although blacks held higher positions in the army, that did not necessarily imply they were treated equally. When black draftees¹⁰ arrived for training, they faced extreme hostility. Some were often forced to eat and sleep outside during winter, as they also went for extended periods of time without proper clothing.

As the war progressed, black organizations and unions like the "United Brotherhood of Elevator and Switchboard Operators" were established to onslaught segregation. Moreover, the arrival of Marcus Garvey to America in 1916 brought so much hope and help for black community as he transferred his Universal Negro Improvement Association from Jamaica to the US. Furthermore, he contributed to this case through several parades, speeches, and supportive writings. Garvey had two important objectives: firstly, he wanted to launch blacks business in the cities to achieve economic independence. Secondly, he intended to integrate the new population which migrated from the south into the city life and send back those who desired to Africa (Garvey, A. J., Clarke, J. H., & Garvey, J., 2014).

¹⁰ A draftee is someone who is conscripted, forced in the military service.

Returning from the war in Europe, African Americans were disheartened and frustrated by the situation at home; blacks were still segregated, living in squalid¹¹ and fear, even the servicemen themselves were disrespected, beaten and often murdered. Therefore, the First World War galvanized black Americans in their fight and resistance against white hierarchy¹². The year 1919 saw many battles in different states, the summer that year came to be known as the red summer for the bloody confrontations and race riots that it produced.

2.3.1. The Great Migration

The years of the First World War marked an important event in the history of African Americans and their life both in their social and economic conditions, it was the Great Migration. A term used to describe the masses of African Americans who migrated from the south to the northern regions of the United States during the years of the First World War until the Great Depression (1910_1930).

One of the main reasons for the Diaspora was the increasing racial discrimination and violence by southern supremacists. Blacks' settlement in the north, however, was not only to enjoy greater freedom but also to grab the opportunity of better educational, housing and employment. Nevertheless, these newcomers were not always warmly welcomed where they moved. Moreover, the migration was opposed by southerners who tried to prevent blacks from leaving. The years of war caused a decline in immigration from Europe, to fill labor shortages; industries whose doors had previously been closed to blacks were finally open and welcomed them as workers. In Omaha, the railroads and the packinghouses were the main jobs that attracted blacks there. They could find work as Pullman Porters, baggage handlers and cooks with the railroads, and as laborers in packing plants. On the other hand, women found work as domestic help where they worked as maids, housekeepers, or nannies. They also found jobs as aides in hospitals and nursing homes.

The Great Migration had a dramatic impact on both the communities African Americans left and the ones they moved to. For instance, in northern cities black population increased a lot which, therefore, created a more diverse society. In her book "the Warmth of Others Suns" the author described the feelings of southern black

¹¹Living in a filthy and degraded condition from lack of care or money.

¹²A power structure; a series of ordered grouping of people at different ranks within a system.

Americans after the migration through these words: "They did not ask to be accepted but declared themselves the Americans that perhaps few others recognized but that they had always been deep within their hearts" (Wilkerson, 2011, p. 538). The growth of black communities was accompanied with the growth of the feelings of solidarity and nationalism which encouraged blacks to make America fully democratic and call for political and economic changes.

2.3.2. The Negro Silent Protest Parade

Silent protest is the act of making a strong public expression of disagreement and disapproval, where the protesters stay quiet to make a formal and solemn declaration of objection and demonstrate disapproval. It is used as a form of civil disobedience and nonviolent resistance. The Negro Silent Protest Parade was a silent march of thousands of blacks along Fifth Avenue starting at 57th Street in New York City on July 28, 1917. The NAACP, church, and community leaders all joined hands on the organizations of the event to protest lynching and anti-black violence.

The parade was precipitated by the East St. Louis riots in May and July 1917 which had been caused by a labor dispute where blacks were used for strike breaking. Thousands of white men descended on East St. Louis and began attacking African Americans, they destroyed buildings and beat people, and few blacks were killed. On May 15, a black teenager farm hand was lynched outside of city hall in Texas. Few days later, on May 22, another black was arrested, awaiting trial, a mob captured him and murdered him Tennessee. The brutality of the attacks and the refusal by the authorities to protect innocent lives contributed to the responsive measures taken by African Americans. Children, dressed in white, led the protest, were followed by women, also dressed in white and men in the back dressed in dark suits. They carried banners and posters stating their reasons for the march. Moreover, there were no chants, no songs, just silence. In his 1938 autobiography *Along This Way*, James Weldon Johnson described the feelings of the audience about the movement, stating that it was one of the most unusual sights he and New York City ever encountered as many people from the audience were shedding tears (2008).

In the following week, Johnson and other black leaders petitioned President Wilson and Congress that lynching be made a federal crime to hold white offenders accountable

for murder. However, they were turned away without regard. The parade was the very first protest of its kind in New York; an instance of African Americans publicly demonstrating for civil rights and anti-lynching manifestation by the NAACP which challenged both the American people and government.

2.3.3. Red Summer

The NAACP field secretary James Weldon Johnson was the one who coined the term “Red Summer” with the word red representing blood. The Red Summer of 1919 refers to the summer and fall that year. According to the NAACP records, at least 25 riots occurred. Indicating a convergence of social tensions centered on labor, race and migration. Across the country there was a brutal outburst of mob violence directed towards blacks. After African Americans returned from the war they expected to find a safe haven, to their surprise however, a ground breaking wave of anti-black riots and lynching rolled across the country starting from April until November (McWhirter, 2011).

The conflicts arose as a result of white servicemen returning from the war and discovering that their vacated jobs had been taken over, notably by African Americans. Furthermore, some whites were concerned about the return of black veterans who received military training and with many of whom had lived abroad which would make them reluctant to surrender to the conventional sociopolitical oppression in the US. The racial hostility of the Red Summer ignited in many southern sites as well as in the north but its existence in the north was mainly the whites’ response to the big in streaming of African Americans into northern cities during the Great Migration; nevertheless, it did not stop the migration.

There were about three dramatically violent incidents, those which took place in Washington, D.C., Chicago and Elaine, Arkansas. Determining the number of murders and injuries during the race riots and lynching is almost impossible, generally there were about thousands of people who lost their lives, were injured and were forced to leave their homes. The Red Summer, however, witnessed the aggressive resistance of African American communities against racial violence and intimidation. Black Americans up rose from the harmful summer with a stronger sense of common goal, identity and pride serving as a crucial stand for future calls.

2.4. The New Negro Movement

The horror of the First World War and the effects of migration reinforced a heightened self-confidence in blacks that attested in the New Negro Movement of the 1920s. That era had several labels such as the Harlem Renaissance, the Negro Renaissance and the Negro Awakening. It was an artistic and intellectual movement as well as a protest against whites' simultaneous prejudices, empowerment and oppression. The movement lasted from around 1919 until the middle of the 1930s. While the Harlem Renaissance was not confined to the Harlem district of New York City, Harlem attracted a remarkable concentration of intellect and talent; it was one of the prime destinations for many black Americans, and there, a distinct way of life developed. Harlem served as the symbolic capital of this cultural awakening, thus, became the centre for an outpouring of African American culture; they celebrated their heritage through music, art, literature, politics and social movements.

It is noteworthy that the one area in which they could best find a voice was in the arts, where it was hard to subdue the expression and freedom of the individual. Moreover, many of the artists and intellectuals, including those from the NAACP, shared a belief that the arts could improve race relations, and that racial problems were caused by moral corruption and ignorance. Literature and arts were considered agents of change and were used to fight for racial equality through embracing literary, musical, and visual arts which showed the Negro abilities and achievements. Thus, black artists and intellectuals found their way in expressing pride in their race and cultural identity. It is significant to point that they were at the forefront of this era and received an unprecedented level of attention, and often respect. The historian Nathan Huggins (1971) stated “these Harlemites were so convinced that they were evoking their people's “Dusk of Dawn”, that they believed that they marked a renaissance” (p.3). Blacks, who were involved in the movement wished to convey through their work that the Negroes can rise, take their rightful place in society, follow the norms and contribute to the American culture in meaningful ways.

According to historians, the sense of being part of the movement was what united the African Americans as they reflected American progressivism in its conviction in America's democratic reform, in its faith and belief in art and literature despite the differences between their types, aesthetics and philosophies. Black Americans did make some progress

in the 1920s, but the stock market crash in 1929 was to mark the beginning of hardship and struggle for all Americans and black Americans in particular were hit hard as businesses collapsed and factories closed.

2.4.1. National Association for the Advancement of colored People

The NAACP, or National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, is America's oldest and largest civil rights organization. It was founded in 1909 and formed in New York City by an interracial group, worried about the ongoing antagonism¹³ against black Americans. At first, the NAACP was almost unrecognizable, but its membership quickly grew from few members to more than 400,000 by the end of the Second World War (Berg, 2005). It developed rapidly, establishing agendas and elaborating tactics dedicated to the goal of achieving an integrated society. From 1920 to 1950 it focused on: anti-lynching legislation, voter participation, programs of education, employment, as well as insurance and enactment of civil rights laws. The NAACP employed a variety of strategies to achieve racial equality which included unexpected tactics such as cultural campaigns that involved the cultivation and promotion of black literary and artistic talent.

At the heart of the organization's cultural campaigns was the conviction that representations of blacks influenced whites' attitude. The NAACP expected that by changing these representations, the way blacks were treated would change. Further, it recognized the potential of culture as a sociopolitical weapon which was being used by whites to deprive blacks their rights. Hence, the possibility of reversing the effect of culture was not completely ill-conceived. During the Renaissance, NAACP adopted cultural pluralism¹⁴ which lionized what was unique in black art while pushing for its acceptance and for it to gain its place within the larger culture. The organization staffs, especially James Weldon Johnson and Walter White were pivotal figures in guiding the New Negroes of the Renaissance. They benefited from the power and influence the NAACP provided and used them to help black artists. NAACP, in the other hand, had different attitudes towards black culture. The most remarkable distinction was its orientation for high and popular culture which they believed it would attract the white middle class attention. According to Nathan Irvin Huggins (2007) NAACP and the

¹³An actively expressed feeling of dislike and hostility.

¹⁴ A social system based on mutual respect for each other's cultures among various groups that make up a society, wherein subordinate groups do not have to forsake their lifestyle but rather can express their culture and participates in the larger society free of prejudice.

movement intellectuals perceived “art and letters as a bridge across the chasm between the races” (p. 5). White Americans would acknowledge and accredit black artists’ talents through the demonstration of high culture.

The Harlem Renaissance offered the NAACP a favorable chance to engage with black culture, but it also brought some troublesome problems. The most debatable one was the issue of white control. Du Bois was deeply concerned about the impact of white authority on African American art. He believed that the African Americans should be the ones who buy and evaluate the black writers work and not the whites. As Du Bois was extremely critical of white control of the Renaissance, he proposed a potential alternative to white patronage and control. It was *The Crisis* and which would become the most influential black magazine at that time. The NAACP's monthly magazine founded by Du Bois in 1910 became a weapon by which the organization fought racial prejudice; the body of work in *The Crisis* contributed to the formation of a collective black identity which was critical to the NAACP fight.

2.4.2. Division within Black Community

It is undeniable that all blacks desired to escape poverty, segregation as well as to be granted equal civil rights. Many knew that the oppressive practices were wrong, but few took action to change the situation. Furthermore, only a meager number of people came forward to advocate for African Americans' civil rights. Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois were two African American activists who stood out in their fight for a racial uplift and their call for full equality. In the early twentieth century, two dominate philosophies emerged regarding the approach blacks should follow to obtain equality. While Washington had the belief that economic success would allow blacks to be accepted into the mainstream white society, Dubois took a more radical approach advocating for Black Nationalism unity among all blacks regardless of their origins. He believed that organizing as a group would mean greater strength in challenging inequality. As the two men articulated opposing viewpoints and approaches, it led to disagreements within the black community, and a division of the black force resulting in smaller, less influential parties.

Both Washington and Du Bois were concerned about political and social equality. When comparing these two, it is important to begin with their overall approach. Their

plans were influenced by their early childhood, as well as other events in their lives. Because of his views on how blacks can obtain their rights, Washington came across as more conservative and he received a lot of criticism for it, while Du Bois was perceived as more progressive or radical. From a young age, Washington noticed the racial inequalities. He was extremely supportive of education. What Washington had in mind, however, was not the typical education but agricultural education. He was realistic in terms of the Negro condition. He felt that blacks' way out of poverty would be through labor. Furthermore, He believed that in order to gain civil rights, black people would have to elevate themselves through hard work and obedience. Washington did not demand equality; rather he urged blacks to work on self improvement so that whites would see them as equals.

With his famous approach “The Talented Tenth”, W. E. B. Du Bois, the leading scholar of the first half of the 20th century, defined the urgency of black social responsibility. He emphasized the importance of higher education in developing the intelligent leadership capacity of the most capable 10% of blacks, devoted to a thorough understanding of the mass of Negroes, solving their problems and leading them into an integrated, equal society. Initially, he believed social science could be the solution to race problem. Nonetheless, he eventually concluded that because of the violent racism, equality could only be achieved through objection and agitation. In 1905, Du Bois led the Niagara Movement, which advocated for full and equal rights. It also served as an ideological forerunner of the NAACP. Further, during the Renaissance, Du Bois presented *The Crisis* which became important in introducing black artists to both the black and white population.

2.5. The Great Depression

The Great Depression lasted from 1929 to 1939. It was undeniably the worst economic downturn in the American history. Apart from the Civil War, the Depression was the country's most serious crisis. America had previously gone through economic struggles, yet none of them had been as severe as the one of 1930s. The latter was distinct due to the fact that it was a financial, agricultural, and industrial crisis. Further, it was because of its length, complexity and durability. It lasted a whole decade during which large numbers of people suffered from poverty and misery. Increased poverty meant more

hunger, more overcrowding, more diseases, and more strain on families that the black community could no longer remain unaffected.

Southern black farmers and sharecroppers suffered greatly because of the drastic decrease in agricultural prices and the loss of urban and international markets. Industry likewise was severely impacted by the crash. Since blacks were usually the last hired and first fired, they suffered more than whites. By 1932, nearly half of the US black workers were unemployed. Moreover, black women were either servants or domestic workers, and they earned less than men for the same jobs. In this issue Wilbur Rich observed:

They had been lured to the city to work in the growing automobile industry, but now many who had worked at menial jobs in the industry were laid off. The city's economy was in chaos, and workers everywhere found themselves on relief. The soup lines were a common sight, and so was fierce competition for the few remaining jobs. Needless to say, racial tensions were high as they always are at times of scarcity. (1999, p. 49)

The misery of that time was so severe that a number of riots and protests were organized. Groups of jobless people organized riots and hunger marches such as the 1931 march on Washington, D.C, to ask for relief programs. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his advisors saw the depression as a chronic problem of the US economy. Therefore, the New Deal programs came with the goal of reforming economic structures in order to achieve economic recovery. Surprisingly, this was a positive shift for blacks. For the first time, racial discrimination was explicitly prohibited in government programs. Even though these rules were often ignored in the south, their establishment was a significant step forward.

The Depression spurred the rise of activism, protesters worked tirelessly to ensure that the black community had indeed equal access to aid. During the early desperate years of the Depression, several black organizations devoted to self-help changed their initial goal and directed their focus towards politics. While they continued to provide the assistance needed, they also put pressure on the New Deal agencies and local governments. Communities galvanized together in order to improve local conditions and support national

campaigns. Furthermore, blacks formed grassroots organizations¹⁵, banding together for economic and political advancement. The “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” boycott campaigns were among the most successful ones. The Great Depression, in fact, had finally ended with the coming of the Second World War through which government spending on it recovered or at least accelerated the recovery from the crisis.

2.5.1. Roosevelt programs

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected in 1932, he promised all Americans a “New Deal” which would provide assistance and security. President Roosevelt surrounded himself with the “Brain Trust” a number of academic and economic advisors who believed that government had to intervene in all aspects of the nation's socioeconomic affairs to improve the quality of American life. The president emphasized in a speech in San Francisco that his administration would have to deal with “establishing markets for surplus production; of meeting the problem of under-consumption; distributing the wealth and products more equitably and adapting the economic organization to the service of the people” (Folsom, 2008, p. 41).

Between 1933 and 1939, Roosevelt implemented a series of programs, public work projects, and financial reforms known as the New Deal. Its goals were to stabilize the economy, reduce unemployment, and develop an ecosystem of social welfare¹⁶ initiatives that would secure a better life for the American citizens. The agencies assisted farmers, the unemployed and helped the disabled and the elderly. The New Deal is often summed up by the “Three Rs”: relief of the problems of unemployment, recovery of the economy through federal spending and job creation, and reform of capitalism through the creation of social welfare programs. New Deal included both laws passed by Congress and presidential executive orders. In the short term, the programs helped the people suffering from the depression events. In the long run, they established a precedent for the federal government to play a key role in America's socioeconomic life. The programs' impact on black communities was diverse. While some discriminated against blacks, others benefited them. In this respect, historians distinguish between the First New Deal (1933-1935) and a Second New Deal (1935-1938), with the latter one being more liberal and controversial.

¹⁵ A grass root organization uses the people in a given district, region or community to form a collective action from local level to effect change at the local, regional, national or international level.

¹⁶ The welfare state refers to a variety of government programs, assisting the poor and protect individuals from the rigorous control of the market place.

The primary distinction is the first new deal attempted mainly to repair the basic economic functions, whereas the second one tried to improve people's lives.

Schools and hospitals were among the services provided by the New Deal programs to the disadvantaged black community. Without a doubt, white America's power and practices often discriminated against blacks and prevailed over the good intentions of New Dealers. The Roosevelt Administration took office at a time when white supremacy was in full bloom and the first order of business was to end the Great Depression. Nonetheless, the New Deal had an overall positive effect on black community. Many blacks were appointed to high positions in the government by the president. Lot of them formed an unofficial advisory group known as the “Black Cabinet” with some becoming the president's advisors and civil rights leaders in the following decades. According to Thomas Sugrue, despite the fact that the Civil Rights movement was a generation away, the New Deal helped African Americans lay the ground to fight for more equal treatment and greater opportunities (2008).

2.5.2. New Deal Agencies

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal of 1933 provided more federal assistance to blacks than at any other time. Nonetheless, the deal legislation and policies saw notable discrimination: relief and public works programs were available to unemployed people of all races, but local officials and contractors, particularly the southerners, twisted the rules to hire fewer black Americans, exclude them from skilled jobs and pay them less than whites. The discrimination happened more often in the early stages of the New Deal.

The First New Deal (1933-1935): Roosevelt requested more executive power from Congress since the beginning of his presidency in order to face the emergency. Then after, he established a new concept of the presidency where the president was the legislative leader rather than Congress. The majority of the bills he proposed established agencies for economic aid. As the New Deal was primarily an economic rehabilitation program, its chief goal was economic recovery. First, the Emergency Banking Act and the 1933 Banking Act dealt with the pressing banking crisis. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration provided financial support for states and local relief efforts. Then, the Agricultural Adjustment Act increased agricultural prices while reducing overproduction and the National Recovery Act sought to raise business profits and workers wages. Finally,

the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) hired young men at federally funded jobs on public lands. According to Olen Cole Jr, despite starting without overt racism, the CCC soon suffered from the actions of white officials in the South. Segregation in the North arose mainly because of white communities racist reactions near the camps (1999).

Second New Deal programs (1935-1938) aimed to improve worker protections and establish financial security, as well as redistribute wealth, income and power in favor of the poor, the elderly, farmers and labor unions. One of its important agencies was the Works Progress Administration which hired many black Americans in public works projects. The Social Security Act of 1935 sought to alleviate the plight of the American poor. Furthermore, the Wealth Tax Act increased taxes on the affluent and created larger taxes on abundance business profits and legacies. At long last, Roosevelt signed the Executive Order 8802 also known as the Fair Employment Act in June 1941 which stated that companies with government defense contracts shall not discriminate on any basis. The order aimed to help blacks and others get jobs in defense industries during production for WWII.

2.6. The Second World War

The United States was neutral during the early years of the Second World War, but soon the isolationism died when the US declared war against Japan on 7 December 1941. The war necessitated the participation of the states' entire populations. Blacks distinguished themselves in their service first as support troops, but due to the rise of casualties many became officers in the army, Marine Corps, navy, air force, and coast guard where they made significant contributions to the war effort. Especially, the Tuskegee Airmen: an ensemble of black men who volunteered for the first flight training program at Tuskegee Institute. There had never been a black pilot before them because the use of Jim Crow laws in blocking blacks' previous attempts. The Tuskegee Airmen accomplished a number of successful missions. Their ideal performances in every theater of the war were recognized and they earned reputations as brave and honorable soldiers.

Despite the avidity of black soldiers to fight in WWII, the practice of discrimination involved every branch of the armed forces as many were in the south. As a result, black soldiers faced unequal treatment and limited opportunities for promotion and transfer. For instance, they carried out their work assignments separately, received medical care from

separate doctors, blood banks, hospitals, and could only socialize in segregated settings. When they left their bases, they were frequently met with hostility from local white civilians. Moreover, the authority of black officers was limited to black units only and if there were whites in these units, the black officers were not allowed to command them. Furthermore, racial beliefs often dragged the use of black American troops in combat units and excluded them from receiving recognition for their service.

Much like the earlier War, millions of American men enlisted in the military, leading to labor shortages. The government, then, had to depend on American women to fill these shortages. Therefore, the image of “Rosie the Riveter” was created to tempt women to join the work force. Painted by Norman Rockwell, Rosie the Riveter interpretation was deeply ingrained in the idea of women embarking in the workforce as a patriotic duty. The term “Rosie” was then applied to American women who went to work in industry. For black women, becoming a Rosie provided not only opportunities to assist the war effort, but also a chance for women economic empowerment. As part of the Great Migration, African American women were on the move, fleeing the oppressive and often demeaning jobs as sharecroppers. Instead, they decided to help with building airplanes, tanks and ships. In addition, some decided to become administrators, welders, railroad conductors and other occupations. Nevertheless, despite performing their significance, Black Rosies were still subjected to virulent racism and sexism on the home front.

2.6.1. The Second Great Migration

The Second Great Migration (1940-1970) is regarded the sequel of the migration of 1920s. While both had a significant impact on the black life, but the second was bigger in scale and impact WWII ushered in tremendous changes in the job types open to blacks and an expansion to the nation’s defense industry. Although these jobs were previously unavailable to them, this changed after president Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 in 1941 prohibiting discriminatory hiring practices by defense industries and the Fair Employment Practice Committee¹⁷ (FEPC) was created to monitor them. The 1940s became a decade of mobility as the agricultural economy altered due to New Deal legislation: crop reduction and mechanization of farming reduced the workers need. Therefore, many left the south to get better job opportunities in the north and west.

¹⁷ The committee was to receive and investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the executive order, and take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it found to be valid.

Migration might have appeared less risky than the earlier one; there were black communities in northern cities, newspapers provided information about social conditions and many blacks had relatives in the north to help with the transition. According to the historian Richard Polenberg (1972) people were generally moving “from the country to city, from south to north, and from east to west.” (p. 139). For black Americans, the movement from rural to urban industrialized areas caused an educational and economic upgrade.

The second phase of the migration increased the urbanization of the black population, a change that many whites opposed leading to some leaving the cities and neighborhoods which welcomed black migrants (Bowler, 1999). As the vacant houses and lands left by the white flight¹⁸ drove down property values, blacks established thriving, independent communities and employment opportunities aided the formation of a large black middle class. New York, Chicago, and Detroit were some of the epicenters that drew many migrants, particularly women and younger blacks because industrial jobs would provide assistance through free government training programs supported by the National Youth Administration¹⁹. Black education and other regulatory and institutional factors improved. Labor economists at the time, such as Wolfbein (1947), observed “a significant shift occurred from the farm to the factory as well as considerable upgrading of Negro workers, many of whom received their first opportunity to perform basic factory operations in a semiskilled or skilled capacity (pp. 663-665). Migrants exchanged their subsistence sharecropper lifestyle of living off plantation for the crowded and discriminated industrial and urban lifestyle.

2.6.2. The Threatened March on Washington

The 1941 threatened March on Washington movement, precursor of the 1963 march, was a watershed moment in the US struggle for civil rights. The NAACP major concern in the early 1940s was fair employment. It launched a national letter-writing campaign protesting discrimination to President Roosevelt, his secretaries and to the members of Congress. Moreover, black activists lobbied too at the federal level. In September 1940, some black leaders met with the president to discuss the inclusion of blacks in the armed forces. Despite promising to study the situation, Roosevelt announced that a military

¹⁸Whites' movement from places that welcomed black migrants.

¹⁹A New Deal agency providing employment and education for citizens whose ages were between 16 and 25.

segregated policy would be upheld. As the lettering campaign and lobbying for military desegregation went in vein, leaders took their protest a step further. In January 1941, at a meeting in Chicago, A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters²⁰ seized upon a proposal that blacks should march on the capitol demanding fair employment and military desegregation to bring about social change. Randolph believed that a coordinated mass movement was required to put pressure on the authorities, while speeches, petitions and conferences became irrelevant. His proposal was a significant transition from the activists' strategies at the time: first, the march meant a vast grassroots effort mobilizing ordinary people and not political elites. Too, he proposed the march as an independent action organized and led by black people themselves.

Throughout the next few months, March on Washington Committee chapters led by NAACP members and external allies prepared for the march which was scheduled for July 1, 1941. By June, newspapers anticipated the participation in the march to exceed 100,000 people. The whites were terrified of the image of such a big number of blacks marching in the most segregated city. The pressure pushed the president to summon Randolph and Walter White to Washington on June 18, he asked them to call a halt in exchange for his personal promise for better treatment of blacks. However, Randolph refused to do so without an executive order forbidding racial discrimination in employment. He was then presented with a series of drafts that he would have to consider and eventually approve. He finally approved a draft and Executive Order 8802 was signed on June 25. The march was then "postponed" via a radio broadcast. Later, Roosevelt established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to investigate violations of the order. Nevertheless, FEPC lacked enforcement power, which was one reason Randolph turned the March on Washington Committee into the March on Washington Movement (MOWM). The MOWM put enough pressure on the president to achieve its goals: after the FEPC creation, a new clause was added in 1943, which enhanced the Commission's authority (Garfinkel, 1969).

²⁰ A labor union founded in 1925 by Randolph, it aimed to improve the working conditions and treatment of blacks who worked on the railroad company.

2.6.3. The Double V Campaign

During the WWII, Double V Campaign was a slogan and a drive to advance blacks' fight for democracy abroad and within the US. In 1942, the campaign was first publicized in the striking black newspaper Pittsburgh Courier. Founded in 1909, it was then the largest black newspaper in the US, advocating for black rights. When WWII broke out in 1939, the newspaper instantly made a connection between the US' treatment of blacks and Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews. As a result, President Roosevelt wrote to the newspaper's editor, Robert Vann, requesting that the paper tone down its racism rhetoric. On January 31, 1942, just weeks after the US declared war on Japan and Germany, the Courier published a letter from twenty-six-year-old James G. Thompson, a defense worker in Wichita, Kansas. Thompson's letter, *Should I Sacrifice to live Half American?* questioned if he should fight for a country that discriminated against him. The letter was made in response to decades of expecting black Americans to be patriotic in times of war, while not receiving equal rights at times of peace. Thompson proposed a "double V" sign, with the first V standing for victory over fascism of enemies from without and the second V for victory over racism of enemies within (Washburn, 1981).

The letter's views prompted the Pittsburgh Courier, to launch the so called "Double V Campaign" on February 7, 1942. It aimed for victory both overseas and in the US. Victory was to be achieved abroad through supporting the war effort, specifically by donating blood, purchasing war bonds and stamps, and conserving waste materials. At the home front, fighting racism, combating the poll tax²¹ and political disfranchisement, calling for equality in education, and opportunities in the defense industry were they ways that would bring victory. For the Courier, while the campaign was distinctly a successful marketing effort, it was much more than that. Blacks from almost every background rallied around the idea that Jim Crow would not remain unchallenged either during or after the war. This era was then seen as a time of great promise for equality because it would be hypocritical for the US which was fighting in a war to spread and protect democracy when its own black citizens were oppressed and did not experience any kind of democracy.

²¹ A tax required in order to vote, it was used to keep poor blacks from voting.

2.7. Conclusion

As the nineteenth century came to an end, white supremacy and segregation became more entrenched particularly in the south, many African Americans saw self-improvement as the greatest opportunity to escape the indignities and humiliations they suffered. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, they built on the efforts to challenge white supremacist patriarchy and their low socioeconomic status. Blacks began to express themselves in new ways and gained racial pride during the Harlem Renaissance. Prior the late 1800s, blacks resided mainly in the southern areas working on plantations. However, during the two wars, dreams about employment advantages and relative racial tolerance changed their geographical location, masses of blacks migrated to the northern and western parts of the country which ended up altering some of their social and economic status. Eventually, the aftermath of the two wars became the main catalyst for the advancement of the civil rights movement.

Chapter Three:

The Civil Rights Movement

3.1. Introduction

The period following the two wars saw an unprecedented opposition to the black Americans' second class citizenship in different parts of the nation. The Jim Crow laws spread racial segregation, discrimination, disenfranchisement and violent hatred across the country, which pervaded mostly all of the private and structural aspects of black life. By the mid-twentieth century, extreme prejudices and direct violence were targeting the black communities. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s arose from the African Americans' need and motivation to seek equality and liberty after their experiences abroad during times of war. The civil rights campaign was only an additional, and fiercer, phase of black fight and protest, rather than something completely new and unprecedented in the American history, which is why it was successful and the reason why it was often entitled as “The Second Reconstruction”. The civil rights' era encompassed some of the most turbulent times and active processes in the history of America. The movement was a political, legal, and social struggle aiming for full citizenship rights and the achievement of racial equality. Both individuals and civil rights organizations challenged segregation and discrimination using a variety of tactics, including protest marches, boycotts, sit-ins and refusal to abide by segregation laws.

In this regard, the last chapter of this dissertation will explore the different ways African Americans took in order to resist the white structural patriarchy and the many activities they participated in, which addressed their grievances and called for equality and social justice. The chapter will also determine which pieces of legislation enacted during the Civil Rights Movement that brought about relief to the black community.

3.2. The Emergence of Civil Rights Movement

The Civil Rights Movement is an umbrella term for the organized efforts and various forms of activism that aimed at securing full political, social, and economic rights for blacks. It began in the late 1940s and ended in the late 1960s. Although riotous at times, the movement was mostly nonviolent advocating for legislation to protect all Americans constitutional rights, regardless of their color, race, sex or origin. The movement arose as a response to the unfulfilled emancipation promises, partially as a result of the experiences of black soldiers in the Second World War. Blacks served in segregated military units while being exposed to US propaganda stressing justice, freedom and equality. Throughout

the war and the immediate postwar years, the struggle for civil rights was growing vividly. Following the qualified gains of the war, blacks lost ground in employment and housing: when whites returned to the work force following the war, blacks were forced out of the skilled wartime jobs. Housing was similarly problematic. Black civil rights activists were progressively irritated with whites' opposition to full equality in housing, employment, and public accommodations. In his Detroit speech, Martin Luther King stated:

Something has happened to the Negro. Circumstances made it possible and necessary for him to travel more: the coming of the automobile, the upheavals of two world wars, the Great Depression. And so his rural, plantation background gradually gave way to urban, industrial life. And even his economic life was rising through the growth of industry, the influence of organized labor, expanded education opportunities. And even his cultural life was rising through the steady decline of crippling literacy. And all of these forces conjoined to cause the Negro to take a new look at himself. Negro masses, Negro masses all over began to re-evaluate themselves, and the Negro came to feel that he was somebody. (King, 1963)

The post-war period saw the growth of blacks' unprecedented energy against the oppression and second class citizenship accorded to them. Moreover, two prominent strands of activism emerged: Martin Luther King nonviolent resistance; he rose to prominence in the early years of movement as the leader who challenged Jim Crow laws in the south, particularly in regard to voting rights, education, and public services. However, as King pushed for the integration of blacks into traditional White society, a second and more radical response had developed: Malcolm X²² and his supporters who were fed up with waiting for access to the rights that African Americans had continuously been promised and denied for decades, patience finally ran out.

The nation's young black population began to demand political action, together with many whites, mobilized and started an unusual fight that lasted for two decades. While many organizations, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Martin Luther King, Jr., the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organized nonviolent demonstrations, individuals challenged the unjust laws and inequalities on their own. Some activists took their fight for equality into formerly white spaces, pushing for a conflict rather than uplift.

²² An African American activist who urged blacks to protect themselves against aggression by any means possible, this stance and his radicalism had often put him at odds with nonviolent leaders.

The civil rights fight involved a diversity of strategies and approaches such as civil disobedience, bringing lawsuits in courts, lobbying the federal government, marches, protests, boycotts, freedom rides, and rallies received national attention such as the newspaper, radio, and television that witnessed and documented the struggle to end racial inequalities. The civil rights activists' efforts yielded numerous significant victories, despite facing fierce opposition of white supremacists. Nonetheless, the fearless supporters of the civil rights movement took some of the hardest first steps toward equality.

3.2.1. Brown V. Board of Education

Brown v. Board of Education, or Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, was a critical 1954 Supreme Court case which declared racial segregation in public schools unconstitutional. The case gave the impression that the separate, but equal doctrine legalized in Plessey v. Ferguson, was in fact not equal at all, and the case became one of the cornerstones of the Civil Rights movement. The five school desegregation cases: Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas; Briggs v. Elliot; Davis v. County School Board of Prince Edward County, Virginia; Bolling v. Sharpe; and Belton v. Gebhart, were designed to challenge the separate but equal doctrine established in the US Supreme Court's 1896 decision. While each case had its own unique set of facts, the central question in each was the legalization of segregation in public schools. In 1952 the Supreme Court combined them into a single case under the name Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka. The case as well as the efforts to overturn the previous decision raised greater awareness to racial inequalities and the struggles African Americans experienced. Brown's victory galvanized civil rights activists and increased efforts to end institutionalized racism throughout the United States.

The relevant events of this case first occurred in 1951, when a public school district in Topeka, Kansas refused to let Oliver Brown's daughter Linda enroll at the closest school to their home, instead requiring her to enroll at a school further away. The Brown family, together with twelve black families who were in similar situations, filed a class action lawsuit in a federal court against the Topeka Board of education, claiming that the segregation policy of forcing black students to attend separate schools was unconstitutional. The US District Court for the District of Kansas on the other hand, ruled against the Browns, justifying their decision on judicial precedent of the Supreme Court's 1896 decision in Plessey v. Ferguson, which declared that segregation did not violate the 14th

Amendment's Equal Protection Clause as long as the facilities and situations were equal. The cases reached the US Supreme Court after several federal district courts denied the requested relief. As a result, the Court consolidated all the five cases together, in which the debate centered on whether the segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race had indeed stripped them of equal protection of the law as guaranteed by the 14th Amendment.

In December 1952, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in these cases. And in an unordinary move, more time was requested for extra oral arguments, which were held in December 1953. In May 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren delivered the unanimous decisions of the Court in both *Brown* and *Bolling*. The Court found that separation in public education had an inconvenient impact on minority children because it was perceived as a sign of mediocrity; attending segregated schools solely because of their race grew a feeling of inferiority in them which weakened their learning motivation and hindered their access to instructive opportunities that they would bask in racially integrated schools. The Supreme Court therefore, overruled *Plessey v. Ferguson* by holding that the "separate but equal" doctrine was unconstitutional for American educational facilities. The writer Jonathan Kozol states in his book *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools*: "During the decades after *Brown V. Board of Education* there was terrific progress. Tens of thousands of public schools were integrated racially. During that time the gap between black and white achievements narrowed" (2012, p. 235). The decision led to more integration in other areas and was considered as a notable success for the Civil Rights Movement. Several future litigation cases employed alike argumentation methods used in this case by the NAACP.

While this was seen as a landmark decision, various white southerners were dissatisfied with this decision. Numerous politicians attempted to actively defy or retard endeavors to desegregate public schools; these collective efforts were known as "the Massive Resistance". Moreover, the Court did not enforce an integration deadline on southern school areas which made the NAACP staff baffled. Soon after, the association arranged briefs suggesting that school desegregation occur before 1956 fall and went to court one more time to argue for this relief. In *Brown v. Board II*, the Court centered attention was directed towards ways that would rapidly incorporate schooling areas. The Court recognized that diverse districts would need to employ different methods to stop

racial segregation, Chief Justice Warren imparted responsibility on local school authorities and the courts which initially heard the cases; implementing the principles which the Supreme Court embraced in the Brown decision was their duty. On 31 May 1955 Warren urged localities to act on the new principles promptly and to move toward full compliance with them with all deliberate speed.

3.2.2. The Murder of Emmett Till

Emmett grew up in a middle class black neighborhood in Chicago. He travelled to Mississippi, which lifestyle differed; whites there were more racist and had established a set of rules and laws, something that the teenager was not aware of. Till, who was spending the summer with family in Money, bought some bubble gum from the Bryant grocery store. He was left alone for about a minute with the 21 year old Carolyn Bryant, the white woman working the store's cash register. What happened in those few moments for certain remains unknown, but whatever it was doomed him. However, many agreed about what happened next outside the store; Emmett whistled at Carolyn as she left the store and walked towards a car. According to his cousin's description, it was as a loud wolf whistle. His cousins realized immediately that he had broken a longstanding taboo concerning the social codes between blacks and whites. Feeling like they were in grave danger, they pulled him and dashed to their car and left Money.

Four days later after the incident, precisely on 28 August 1955, he was kidnapped from his uncle's home Wright Moses by Bryant's husband, Roy, and Roy's half brother, J. W. Milam. Emmett's mangled body was discovered three days later in the Tallahatchie River, with a large cotton-gin fan tied around his neck. He had been brutally beaten and shot through the head. The body was so decomposed when it was retrieved from the river that it could only be identified by a signet ring bearing the initials "L. T." Louis Till, Emmett's father's name. The brave act of his mother "Elizabeth Till" in allowing the world to see her son's disfigured body exposed the racist and ongoing threats and maltreatment blacks' face in the American society. She explained her decision in a speech delivered shortly after the acquittal of Emmett's murderers. Few moments after seeing Emmett's corpse for the first time,



Figure.3. Emmitt Till before and after his mutilation (adapted from : <https://www.facingsouth.org/2016/08/living-legacy-emmett-tills-casket>)

I said, Roy [Mooty, Mamie's cousin], anybody that wants to look at this, can see it. I'm tired of stuff being covered up. If some of these lids had been pulled off of Mississippi a long time ago, then something like this wouldn't be happening today. So far as my personal feelings are concerned, they don't count ... And if my son had sacrificed his life like that, I didn't see why I should have to bear the burden of it alone. There was a lesson there for everybody. (Hudson, 1994, p. 304)

She decided to have an open-casket funeral after seeing the mutilated remains of her only son to show the world what the racist killers had done. An African American weekly magazine, published a photo of Emmett's disfigured body, and the story soon spread to the mainstream media. Bryant and Milam abduction and murder trial began on September 19. The uncle "Moses Wright" identified the two men as the assailants but the all-white jury acquitted them of Till's murder. Shortly after the trial, the Bryant grocery store was forced to close due to a boycott and the Bryants and Milam moved to Texas. Numerous people around the country were outraged by the verdict as well as the state's decision not to charge the two with the kidnapping case. This heinous murder and grotesque miscarriage of justice helped galvanize global support for the modern American civil rights movement; emphasizing the scandalous treatment of blacks.

3.2.3. Rosa Parks' Arrest

Rosa McCauley was born in Alabama in 1913. She married Raymond Parks at the age of 20 years old. The couple was involved in the NAACP's Montgomery chapter. Mrs. Parks served as secretary while working as a tailor's assistant. On the evening of December 1, 1955, Parks decides to take a seat on the bus on her way home from work. However, due to her refusal to give up her seat to a white passenger, Parks was arrested for violating an Alabama segregation law. The law stated that the front of a Montgomery bus was reserved for white riders, while the backseats were for blacks. Nonetheless, it was only by custom that bus drivers had the authority to ask black passengers to give up their seats for a white rider. The Montgomery laws were also contradictory with one stating that segregation must be enforced, and another which was largely ignored, stating that no passenger, either white or black, should be asked to give up a seat even if there was no available seat.

In Montgomery, Parks was not the first person to be prosecuted for disobeying the segregation laws. Her arrest, however, became a rallying point around which the black community unionized a protest against years of discrimination. Unintentionally, Parks'

single act of nonviolent resistance ignited the Montgomery bus boycott; a year-long mass protest that culminated in the US Supreme Court declaring segregation on public buses unconstitutional. Furthermore, it pushed both Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks into the national spotlight. The origin of the boycott dates back to the day of Mrs. Parks' trial, when community leaders called for a one day boycott. As the protest appeared to be successful, the leadership decided to extend it and formed the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA). Next, they chose Dr. King, a new member to the community, as their leader because he was new to the area and had few enemies and, thus, local leaders believed he could rally the various factions of the black community to the cause. Parks also spoke in churches and other organizations, including some in the north, to increase funds and publicize the MIA. Thousands of blacks walked or found other means of travel for work, school and shopping. In addition, a system of carpools was created; African American taxi drivers charged the same price as bus fare for black riders. Drivers and passengers on the other hand, were frequently ticketed or arrested, and many boycott supporters were harassed and threatened with job loss.

The MIA coordinated the boycott, which demonstrated the potential for peaceful mass dissent to effectively challenge segregation and serve as an example for other southern campaigns. Bi-weekly mass meetings provided cohesion to the protest, moral support, and opportunities for fundraising. The MIA also operated a welfare committee and relief fund that supported individuals who had lost jobs due to their participation in the boycott. The association initially demanded that seating should be allotted on a first-come, first-served, with black Americans starting in the back and whites beginning in the front of the bus. They inquired too that black bus drivers should be employed for routes fundamentally made up of black passengers. However, the Montgomery bus companies and authorities denied meeting the requests. As a result, the MIA filed a federal suit against bus segregation, and on June 5, 1956, a federal district court announced that buses segregated seating to be illegal. In mid-November, the Supreme Court upheld that ruling. Finally, the federal decision went into effect on December 20, 1956 and the boycott ended after almost a year after it had began. Rosa Parks became known as the “Mother of the Civil Rights Movement” and was honored with global awards, while King achieved his first national fame as the public became acquainted with his powerful oratory.

3.3. The Campaigns

The 1950s and 1960s were periods of dramatic evolution; they witnessed the accomplishment of a number of the movement's goals such as ending racial segregation and securing legal recognition and federal protection. The achievement was through several acts of civil disobedience, legal battles, and promotion of the idea of Black Power²³ which was at the time the chief political, cultural, and social striving force in the American theater that pushed to bring about some changes and disrupted the legal system of Jim Crow. It was made up of everyday black men, and women, whom had often put their lives on the line to challenge the white American power structure. Fortunately, the movement ended up gaining traction through marches, sit-ins, protests, and boycotts. While most of its popular representations are usually centered on the leadership and philosophy of King, and Malcolm X, the movement was far too diverse to be attributed to a single person, strategy, or campaign.

It is necessary to note that the NAACP was a significant contributor, despite the fact that other civil rights organizations emerged. The NAACP maintained its position as a crucial pillar of the movement through several occasions like: co-organizing the 1963 March on Washington, and successfully lobbying for legislation that culminated in the 1964 Civil Rights Act²⁴ as well as the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Equally important, massive direct action was another pivotal approach that became the movement's salient strategic weapon during the movement's height period. The strategy was highly effective, especially due to the widespread news media coverage of nonviolent dissenters who were constantly harassed and beaten. For instance, on February 1, 1960 four black American college students in Greensboro, North Carolina, inspired by Gandhi's nonviolent protest, refused to leave a Woolworth's segregated lunch counter before being served. The Greensboro sit-in sparked a sit-in movement that soon spread to college towns throughout the region. Though many of the protesters were arrested for disorderly conduct or disturbing the peace, their actions made southern establishments slowly abandon their segregationist policies. Moreover, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed following

²³ A political slogan and a name for various associated ideologies attempting to achieve black determination. It was often used by Malcolm X, advocating for blacks self-reliance and self-defense in the face of racial violence.

²⁴ When a bill is passed in identical form by both the Senate and House of Representatives, it is sent to the president to sign, if he does, it becomes a law or an act of Congress.

the incident, becoming the only national civil rights organization completely led by young people.

The movement's overall strategy combined litigation, the use of mass media, boycotts, demonstrations, and other forms of civil disobedience to mobilize public opposition to the constitutional racism and secure substantive legal reform in US. The movement contributed to the national crisis that compelled the federal government to intervene in overturning segregation laws in southern states, restore voting rights for blacks, and put an end to the legal repressive discrimination in housing, employment and education. Even though the movement witnessed diverse approaches, philosophies, organizations and campaigns, the main aim was common; they had all served the same purpose eventually. Nonetheless, the movement was characterized by major campaigns of civil resistance. During the last decade of the movement, these protests produced clashing situations between activists and government authorities. Some of these instrumental campaigns that brought remarkable changes during that period were the Freedom Rides, the 1963 March on Washington and Chicago Freedom Movement.

3.3.1. Freedom Rides

Two Supreme Court rulings had outlawed segregation in interstate rail and bus terminals as far back as 1946; nonetheless, many southern areas maintained separate spaces. They used different ways to circumvent federal rulings through local custom and "Jim Crow" laws. In *Boynton v. Virginia* the United States Supreme Court ruled in 1960 that segregation in the travel facilities such as bus stations was unconstitutional. On May 4, 1961 the first Freedom Ride, led by CORE director James Farmer was launched. The Freedom Ride was an interracial group consisting of 13 southern and northern men and women, some of whom were old and others were young college students. They wanted to put the federal laws to test, as it was widely known that any black trying to sit at the front of an interstate bus or use the previously whites-only facilities would face a violent response. Their plan was to depart from Washington DC and ride through southern states, ending with a rally in New Orleans, Louisiana on May 17, the date representing the seventh anniversary of the Brown decision. In addition, the group was accompanied by three journalists whom along with the riders underwent extensive training in nonviolent direct action before starting the ride; the primary rule was even if attacked, they would not respond with violence in self-defense.

The ride's concept was simple and straightforward: at each segregated bus terminal, the group would seek service in the "whites-only" section. If served, they would consider that location in accordance with federal law. Otherwise, they would be beaten or they would go to jail without resisting. They hoped, however, a crisis would occur so that the federal government would be compelled to enforce the law. Furthermore, their strategy was to have at least one interracial pair sitting in adjoining seats and at least one black rider sitting up front, a place that was usually reserved for white passengers only. The remaining riders would sit scattered throughout the rest of the bus, with one abiding by the segregation rules in order to avoid being arrested and to contact CORE and arrange bail for those who were nabbed. Little trouble was encountered as they travel through Virginia and North Carolina. They had also passed through Georgia and Atlanta without incident. However, in Alabama and Mississippi the Freedom Rides were marred by horrific violence from white racist protestors, and the buses were firebombed in both Anniston and Alabama. The journeys sparked national attention and led to similar rides across the country, attracting international attention by demonstrating how widespread segregation was still in the South (Carson, 2007).

Several Freedom Riders emerged in the next few months. By defying the K.K.K, the prison and mob violence, the riders raise the stake. Their willingness to be beaten, arrested, and jailed stymied the federal government. As a result, authorities called for a "cooling off period" and labeled the rides unpatriotic since they embarrassed the United States on the world stage. Nevertheless, the three emergent organizations at the time: Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) all rejected any "cooling off period". Instead, they formed the Freedom Riders Coordinating Committee to keep the rides going. Finally, the Interstate Commerce Commission issued regulations forbidding segregation in bus and train stations throughout the country in September 1961; passengers were permitted to sit wherever. Additionally, the "White" and "Colored" signs were removed from the terminals and separate places were merged together.

3.3.2. The 1963 March on Washington

By the 1960s, the Civil Rights Act was still dragging in Congress, and equality for Americans of color kept appearing like a far-fetched dream. Many black Americans were still unemployed or working in low-paying jobs. By 1962, black leaders came to realize

that their fight for equal rights was not progressing at the desired pace, even though demonstrations and speeches were drawing attention. African American leaders had only wanted their civil rights as to be equalized. Following the wake of violent attacks on civil rights protests in Birmingham, Alabama, momentum grew for another mass protest on the capital of the US in 1963. The march was the brainchild of longtime labor leader A. Philip Randolph, and was organized by his chief aide Bayard Rustin. Together they started working on plans to protest segregation, the lack of voting rights, and unemployment. Randolph believed in the power of the masses, which included industrial workers, sharecroppers, porters, and the unemployed, instead of a rally by only educated and professionals. Furthermore, they sought the support of major civil rights organizations to bring the plight of the people to the attention of the nation.

Indeed, the March on Washington captivated the nation's attention on August 28, 1963 as an interracial mass assembly in the nation's capital. The March was initially opposed by President John F. Kennedy, whom was concerned that the event might aggravate the racial tensions and erode the public support for the civil rights movement. However, Randolph, King and other leaders insisted that the march should continue. Fittingly, the march was a huge success, becoming one of the largest rallies in US history, as well as one of the most famous examples of non-violent mass direct action. It brought together various civil rights groups, unions, and even religious organizations, including the National Association for the NAACP, SNCC, and the SCLC. They had all joined hands with Randolph to plan for the anticipated change-making protest. As the official name suggests, people descended on the nation's capital to demand "jobs and freedom". They believed that every American should be guaranteed access to stores, restaurants, hotels, and other public accommodations, as well as satisfactory housing, integrated education, and voting rights. The March had, therefore, become an impeccable mean for urging Kennedy to pass a bill ending public segregation.

The March was scheduled on the hundredth anniversary of the emancipation and at the Lincoln Memorial which made the event meaningful. Moreover, it included speeches from prominent civil rights and religious leaders, the speech given by King had uplifted the crowd through its emotional strength and prophetic quality. The address became known as the "I Have a Dream" speech, in which king centered his focus on his hope that all men would someday be brothers and that that one day his kids would live in a nation where they

would not be judged by their skin color but by the content of their hearts (Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have A Dream*", 1986). After the march, the leaders walked from the Lincoln Memorial to the White House, where they met with Kennedy and Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson to demand support for a national civil rights bill. With the help of widespread news coverage, the nation's attention was attracted to the protesters' issues and demands. Though they were passed after Kennedy's death, the provisions of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965 reflect the demands of the march. The 1963 became one of the prime pillars of the Civil Rights movement and had inspired a large number of subsequent protests.

3.3.3. Chicago Freedom Movement

The Chicago Freedom Movement also known as Chicago Open Housing Movement was founded to dissent segregated housing, instructive deficiencies, as well as racial disparities in employment, income and health care. The movement employed a set of strategies including rallies, marches and boycotts. Moreover, the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCCO) was created in 1962 due to the spread of the de facto²⁵ segregation of public schools and housing in the city. The Chicago Urban League, NAACP chapter in Chicago, and the Woodlawn Organization had all become a part of the council. In addition, Albert Raby, a local teacher, was chosen by the CCCO to lead, organize and assemble the group. In July 1965, he invited Dr. King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to lead a protest against de facto segregation which had dominated the black public life in Chicago. The SCLC joined the CCCO in a demonstration and they marched on the City Hall, demanding a more open and civilized city for the black community in July 1965. Soon after, the SCLC announced that it would join forces with the CCCO and together they formed the "Chicago Freedom Movement".

The movement began to gain traction throughout the city thanks to its huge demonstrations which included various forms of non-violent mass direct action that addressed a variety of racial issues facing black Chicago residents. Movement leaders, however, hoped that the housing issue would garner widespread support from Chicago black residents as housing segregation subsisted in every area of the housing market, therefore, its effect reached class and neighborhood lines. Moreover, King was also in

²⁵ Racial segregation creating disparities occurring by fact rather than an institutionalized legislation intended to segregate.

favor of the housing focus because it offered the possibility of assisting the enactment of federal legislation at a time when Congress was debating President Johnson's fair housing bill. Besides, the campaign was primarily led by poor residents who were in the meantime living busily as factory workers, health aides, students, or parents. It was the SCLC idea and hard work that guaranteed that the primary leaders of the campaign were the ones who were relatively affected by those issues. Unfortunately, as the marches progressed, white supremacist sentiment invaded Chicago's streets.

Chicago's diverse black community proved to be difficult to organize, throughout the summer, King and his staff kept warning about the use of violence and working to overcome the growing opposition of whites who were concerned about the impact of fair housing on their neighborhoods. As a further matter, in late August, an influx of supremacist groups occurred; white racist groups from the different parts of the nation and members of the K.K.K., all occupied the city to resist the campaign. As a response, black activists launched series of larger rallies within white neighborhoods. During one of those marches, blacks were met with racially fueled violence leaving many protestors with serious injuries. Nevertheless, the SCLC and CCCO held a bigger rally at Chicago's Soldier Field on July 10, 1966. Following the rally, King led a group of dissenters to the Chicago City Hall, where he posted a list of demands. Throughout this period, President Johnson took few public or private steps in attempt to get the 1966 fair housing provisions passed by Congress. Finally, with King's assassination on April 4, 1968 Johnson had an opportunity to press for the passage of the Housing Act as a step towards realizing King's dreams of equality.

3.4. The Organizations

The modern Civil Rights Movement began in the early 1950s, fueled by several incidents such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955. From its inception to its end after the enactment of civil rights acts during the late 1960s, the movement was led by several organizations, which worked together to influence change in the American society. Black Americans, along with their white colleagues' assistance, mobilized for an unprecedented journey for social justice. While there is more to achieve in ending discrimination, it was all for the purpose of regulating equal access to public accommodations, equal justice before the law, and equal employment, education, and housing opportunities.

It is important to shed light on the fact that racial uniformity would never be accomplished by a single person or organization; it takes a variety of activists, unions, and tactics to achieve the required and essential changes. The black church, however, was the root of all civil rights organizations and served as a crucial institution that helped propel the Civil Rights Movement while maintaining the unity of the black community (Wright, 2000). People started to assemble for the campaign as the churches had increasingly embraced the civil rights activity. According to Gaines (2010) the black church during the Civil Rights Movement was a force to be reckoned with. There is no other black institution capable of boasting the political, social, and economic power of African Americans larger than the black church (p. 366). Black church pioneers had often impressive oratory qualities and could make well organized events, in addition to their call for nonviolent protests and for forgiveness.

The movement encompassed religious groups, labor unions and litigation organizations like the NAACP which was a major contributor in the fight for equality legislation. Through co-organizing the 1963 March on Washington, and successfully lobbying for legislation that ended up with the passage of 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act, it succeeded in securing its prominent position in the campaign. Moreover, other groups such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) had all took part in gigantic dissents to quicken the momentum for the enactment of civil rights legislation. Despite the fact that they did not always agree upon their approaches and tactics as well as their diverse members who had different classes and backgrounds, the movement nevertheless cohered around the goal and mission to secure the political, educational, social, and economic rights of blacks.

3.4.1. Congress Of Racial Equality

Established in 1942 by a racially mixed group of students in Chicago, the Congress of Racial Equality played an important role in the Civil Rights Movement. It broke the new ground of using the nonviolent direct action, involving boycotts, pickets and sit-ins, contributing to the movement's publicity. Moreover, CORE members were continuously trained not to react or resist to any type of attack because it could backfire them and damage the movement's reputation. Although CORE was smaller than the NAACP and their activism was frequently focused on the northern areas, its strategies inspired various

salient organizations and local groups. For instance, the SNCC and the SCLC were deeply influenced by CORE and ended up mirroring its tactics or developing similar ones. Despite seeking peaceful, nonviolent protests, CORE members had constantly faced white's hate and violence. Unintentionally, this attitude gave CORE more national and sometimes international attention and recognition, a twist that increased the organization's support, income, donations, and enrollment rates.

In 1961, CORE expanded its network after being based solely on the north, through making several interracial groups, traveling on freedom rides to desegregate southern interstate stations. From this point, CORE, under new guidance, altered its focal point from civil disobedience to attempts and efforts assisting Black Nationalism and political self-determination. Later on, its leaders coordinated with local groups the voter registration drives such as the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer. CORE's task in making its infamous nonviolent direct action consisted of different types of ingrained power such as the power of publicly protesting the social injustice, the possession of active goodwill and forgiveness as well as the refusal to be involved in unfair and wrongdoings, generally the power of being humane. Furthermore, its rule was the rigorous commitment to mixed racial membership; the organization's leaders had faith and hope that public displays of interracial unity and disciplined use of nonviolence would transform the US into a colorblind democratic society.

3.4.2. Southern Christian Leadership Conference

The very beginnings of the SCLC can be traced back to the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Following its victories in 1956, the black activist Bayard Rustin published a chain of working papers. He questioned the need of a new organization which would coordinate and expand the endeavors of the boycott to other southern segregated locations. King, in favor of the suggestion, invited black ministers and church leaders to discuss the matter, after long deliberation with his trusted consultants. In Atlanta, a gathering of many of the southern important figures took place in 1975. They came to the conclusion that an organization on transportation and nonviolent integration should be found, and it later became known as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Founded by Dr. Martin Luther King, the SCLC was primarily dedicated to the fight against racism through peaceful mass dissent.

The SCLC main missions took place in the segregated south in addition to few Border States. The SCLC operated through the conduct of some development programs that served the public need such as the leadership-training programs, and the voter-registration crusades. Moreover, the organization started to diversify its scope, resulting in the inclusion of unequal economic issues to its agenda during the 1960s. The SCLC recognized the fact that the cause of the social injustice was due to the fact that black community was gravely impoverished and lacked any source of power. In 1962, SCLC launched the Operation Breadbasket²⁶ in Atlanta to provide additional employment opportunities and in 1966 the program expanded to Chicago. Several months later, a plan advocating for the rights of the marginalized people of all races started. Under the name of Poor People's Campaign, thousands of poor people were brought to the capital, calling for a federal legislation guaranteeing job opportunities, payment, and housing.

SCLC membership was based on the collaboration with local groups, unions and churches instead of individual recruitment. From the organization's inception until his murder in 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. served as the organization's first and prime leader. His assassination, on the other hand, hindered the SCLC's momentum and subverted the expected success of the Poor People's Campaign as it was often overshadowed by his prominence. Nonetheless, the organization's significant impact on the Civil Rights Movement is undeniable. The SCLC notable anti-discrimination and voter-registration efforts in many campaigns in the early 1960s, spurred passage of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

3.4.3. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

In the early 1960s, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was formed in Raleigh, North Carolina, to draw advantages on the success of the students' sit-ins. SNCC organizers worked tirelessly on the southern parts of the US during the height of movement, through planning sit-ins, voter registration drives, and mass protests. Its form of nonviolent campaign elevated the SNCC to national prominence, while bringing the aggressive white racism into the nation's spotlight. Moreover, SNCC formed a musical group, Freedom Singers, as an activity which popularity made a big contribution to the youth's inspiration and increased the movement's capital supplies. In terms of goals, the

²⁶ A program that used the persuasive power of black ministers and the organizing churches to create economic opportunities in black communities.

committee primary objective was the empowerment and the call for change, it sought to organize and support direct-action that challenged the southern segregation in addition to the political exclusion of black Americans. Thereafter, SNCC became one of the key organizations that participated in the civil rights battle (Carson, 1981).

SNCC was present in major civil rights occasions in the 1960s. For much of its early history, the committee fought the dread which limited the southern blacks, particularly the rural ones, from voicing their opposition to their oppressive situation and the fear that deprived them of their rights. The fight was through building powerful and effective local movements, the freedom rides in 1961 were one of its earliest protests. In the years that followed, SNCC launched a southern voter registration campaign, believing that voting was the key, unlocking black political power. By 1965, SNCC had larger staff than any other southern civil rights organization. It also coordinated much direct action besides the voter-registration projects that broadened the scope of political strife. In her autobiography *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (1997), Ann Moody shared how she was recruited by SNCC members to work on the voter registration drive while she was a student. She also recounted how SNCC members both African Americans along with white workers lived and fought together for liberty and equality for all American citizens. Unlike conventional active groups that only focused merely on the integration of blacks into the social order, SNCC aimed for auxiliary changes in American society.

Civil rights pioneers viewed these organizers as a capable new force which would be crowned with the win of the blacks' equal rights through their powerful endeavors in fighting racism. Little by little, the committee started counting their continuous triumphs, accrediting SNCC with breaking down both institutional and psychological boundaries and the empowerment of black community. However, as the committee got to be more dynamic politically, in addition to its remarkable and successful progress, the SNCC members experienced extreme savagery from whites. In response, they migrated from a philosophy of nonviolence to one of greater combativeness by the end of the 1960s. As the SNCC directed the focus on African American identity, a racial separatism occurred, even though the committee was interracial during its earliest years.

3.5. Civil Rights Height

The movement's continuous struggle as well as the endeavors of a whole race forced legislators to enact a series of civil rights legislation in the 1950s and 1960s. Although blacks gained the right to vote soon after their emancipation, several southern states deprived them from their voting rights. In order to vote, they were frequently required to pass some literacy tests²⁷. The goal of full social, economic, and political equality still had not been reached. The majority of white population did not like the idea of black civil rights; they initially opposed the civil rights movement and its demand for racial equality. But this opposition was not big enough to join a clan or to be use violence. After finally being confronted with the fact that their lives might change, then a lot of them changes their positions, some ended up supporting civil rights for a bunch of complicated reasons.

Although there were exchanges between the leaders of the movement and the federal government throughout the period, the reasons behind the federal response at the beginning of 1960s was because of political figures who sought strategies to minimize racial conflict. Thereafter, the Kennedy administration implemented a dual strategy. First, the Department of Justice tried to publicize “voluntary desegregation” by collaborating with executives of national companies and civil organizations. Next, administration officials worked with these same groups to grow support for major legislation among key interest groups. On June 11, 1963, President John F. Kennedy demanded Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the right to be served in facilities which are open to the public. During that decade, Kennedy’s speech and subsequent introduction of ambitious civil rights legislation paved the way for landmark legislation (Jeffrey, 2006).

3.5.1. Ensuing legislation

The Eisenhower administration pressured Congress to consider new civil rights legislation, demonstrating their commitment to the movement. On September 9, 1957, the Civil Rights Act was passed, empowering the government to prosecute states which violated citizens’ voting rights. It also created a federal Civil Rights Commission with authority to investigate discriminatory situations and recommend corrective measures. The act was the first significant civil rights legislation ever since Reconstruction. Moreover, it

²⁷ Complex interlocking systems used to deny the poor uneducated blacks the right to vote as they were mainly impossible to pass.

established a stronger federal role in protecting the rights of black community and other minorities. Even though the act did not offer new rights, it laid the groundwork for federal enforcement of civil rights law by creating the Civil Rights Division in the Department of Justice.

From 1960 to 1962, the Kennedy administration took a reactive or crisis management response to emerging protest focusing on peak events. As a result, another remarkable legislative achievement during this critical phase of the movement was the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. On July 2, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 into law, which banned discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. The law was applicable to government agencies, business, and schools and federally funded private institutions (“United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights”, 1999). The act addressed also voting rights, and equality for job opportunities, public accommodations, and more. Additionally, it established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission that assisted the prevention of workplace discrimination. The act was regarded as one of the biggest achievements of the movement. However, the act did not prevent discrimination in practice as it did in theory. Some states still found ways to avoid desegregation, and numerous African Americans were too afraid to report their complaints. Nevertheless, the act paved the way for two pivotal follow-up laws: the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

The Voting Rights Act, signed into law by President Johnson on August 6, 1965, aimed to removing the legal barriers at the state and local levels that limited blacks’ voting exercise under the fifteenth amendment. Through this act, the federal government could overturn state laws that hindered blacks' voting process; it prevented the use of literacy tests and other devices that disenfranchised racial minorities. The act was the major statutory change in the relationship between the federal and state governments in voting area. Furthermore, less than a week after the assassination of king, Johnson encouraged Congress to pass a bill before his funeral. King's murder demanded prompt action by the federal government for both symbolic and practical reasons; congressional action paved the way a way for a unifying statement about the collective loss the country had faced. As a result, the House of Representatives passed the Fair Housing Act of 1968. On April 11, 1968, President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, more commonly known as the Fair Housing Act, ensuring equal housing opportunities and prohibiting discrimination

in the sale, rental, and financing of housing based on race, origin, sex, religion, status, and disability.

3.5.2. Impact and Response

The Civil Rights Movement had a significant impact on the American society. It racked up many notable victories; from the abolition of the southern Jim Crow institution through the passage of civil rights legislation to the widespread recognition of black cultural heritage and its unique contributions to the history of the United States. Generally, the major remarkable achievements were crucial civil rights acts that ensured constitutional privilege providing greater access to resources for blacks, women, religious minorities, and low-income families. Despite the fact that these rights were first guaranteed in the US Constitution in the post-slavery period, they had never been completely enforced. Only after years of widely publicized civil rights protests, marches, and sometimes violence, political leaders were impelled to enforce these rights.

There were some social and political issues raised by the white response to the new laws, regardless its acceptance appeared to be far brighter than the one faced by the 1954 Supreme Court's decision on Brown case. The reaction in general followed the pattern established by previous attempts to change racial codes and customs. The shift was occurring much more rapidly and smoothly in urban locations than in rural ones and in places with fewer African Americans than in the "Black Belt."²⁸ Whites were less likely to support ideas of biological racism or the idea that whites should always be privileged more than blacks, and they were less likely to support sporadic rioting and violence. Nevertheless, these changes did not significantly alter the face of racial injustice in the United States and this was one of the movement's weaknesses. Moreover, many black Americans continued to face limited access to social services, as well as systemic inequalities in institutions like public education (Smiley, 2016). The fight for social justice was far from over; the discrimination, exclusion, and exploitation addressed by the civil rights legislation were thoroughly entrenched and had proved to be difficult to eradicate.

²⁸A region with highly fertile black soil. Used to be worked by slaves, constituting majority of the population in counties like Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi.

3.6. Conclusion

The Civil Rights Movement was a struggle for social justice and an organized effort by black Americans and their white allies, demanding equal civil rights under the law in the United States. The movement galvanized in the late 1940s and ended in the late 1960s. It was fueled by the arrest of Rosa Parks as well as the shameful, sadistic murder of the African American teenager Emmett Till. The movement was not completely invested in interracial cooperation only or discrimination as a character issue. Rather, as a redefinition of American society and a redistribution of socioeconomic power. Although tumultuous at times, the movement remained nonviolent in the majority of time and resulted in the passage of pieces of legislation protecting every American's constitutional rights, regardless of religion, race, sex or national origin. The civil rights acts granted equal access to public accommodations, equal justice before the law, fair employment, education, and housing opportunities, bringing an end to the Civil Rights Movement.

General Conclusion

General conclusion

When Africans first landed in America, they were used as slaves. The institution of slavery played a major role in the formation of the United States as a nation. It was practiced there throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, enslaved people's life was outrageously difficult as they were treated as a property rather than human beings. Slavery influenced the creation and development of the nation main political and social institutions, it is not a single event, but rather a whole chapter and a cornerstone of the American history. Following the establishment of slave codes, black life became even more burdensome; the punitive rules closely regulated the actions of the supposedly freed people. Enslaved Americans were, therefore, the brutalized victims of two and a half centuries of oppression. However, slaves initiated resistance against their white masters, and the anti-slavery movement began.

Soon after the Civil War broke out, and despite willing to allow slavery to continue in the south to preserve the union at the beginning, President Abraham Lincoln policies regarding abolition altered over the course of the war, resulting in the issue of the emancipation proclamation which freed enslaved people and permitted their participation in the war. Lincoln's decision marked a watershed moment in the conflict which ended with the victory of the union and the eradication of slavery. Later on, Reconstruction amendments outlawed slavery, and granted blacks citizenship, equal rights, and barred voting discrimination on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude. A radical change, which many states, particularly the southern ones, could not accept.

The main objectives of this dissertation was to investigate the different ways in which white Americans tried to force black Americans into similar conditions as slavery ones which would make them remain inferior to whites and become no more than second class citizens. Moreover, the dissertation explored the way African Americans resisted whites' different attempts to degrade them and how they fought the white supremacist tyranny in order to regain their civil rights which the amendments had previously provided them and realize the farfetched dream of equality.

The study's findings have revealed some historical events which implemented the white supremacy into the United States. The Civil War had officially abolished slavery, but it did not end discrimination against black people, who continued to endure the devastating

General conclusion

effects of racism, especially in the south. The birth of this tyranny can be traced back to the creation of the Black codes which served as a social control for the African Americans in both their personal and public life. Additionally, the institution of Jim Crow introduced a new doctrine of separate but equal into the American scene with the Plessey V Ferguson Court's decision. The doctrine employed a segregation policy, splitting the country and enforcing the white supremacist patriarchy. Furthermore, the emergence of various white racist paramilitary organizations instilled fear in black communities, these groups used violence to intimidate, threaten, and punish the freedmen who tried to resist the segregation laws. Besides, the groups aimed also to deprive blacks from some rights like voting rights and limited black opportunities in different fields such as housing and employment.

Results of the study brought into light the many paths African Americans took to overcome the white patriarchal oppression and pave their way to the achievement of their dreams about social justice. Many of the black communities fought in WWII, while hoping for more equality when the war ended as it sounded absurd to them that America was fighting for freedom and democracy in Europe, when there was so much inequality back home. Despite that, America was still the same, blacks continued to live in separated neighborhoods and to be constant victims of discrimination and disfranchisement. Even though, black Americans had been fighting against racial injustice for centuries, however, the struggle against racism and segregation entered the mainstream of American life in the mid-twentieth century. Suddenly, there were “sit-in” protests and boycotts erupting across the south and few northern areas. America was not ready for the nonviolent demand for equality, but soon Woolworth's policy of segregated lunch counters was abandoned. The victory galvanized the Civil Rights movement in the remaining states, and many organizations and union were quickly formed in order to advocate for the movement campaigns and demands. Whether it was political, legal, economic, or social, blacks addressed whatever abuse they had faced and fought through any crisis they encountered. Legislation during the 1960s crowned their efforts and granted them with was long forcefully kept from them.

Freedom and tyranny were, therefore, wrapped together in the same historical bundle, feeding upon each other and shaping one another. White supremacy was both the product and legacy of slavery; African Americans were continuously judged without ever considering their calamitous experience. Due to the superiority feelings of ex-slave-owners,

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southern whites had an unchangeable ascendance of hierarchy. The majority of southern whites were determined to resist black equality and they often employed white racial resentment as a tool to regain political power. Blacks, on the other side, fought for their civil rights, and their individual and collective accomplishments depicted the justice of their cause.

To put up the shutters, this humble research has brought the evidences which determined the ways whites tried to subjugate black people and the ways blacks fought back the repression and surmounted it in the different fields and the different states, making the hypotheses irrefutable. Anyhow, the concept of racism and race relations has always been a sensitive subject in America. Regardless of its perception, either empathy or prejudice, racism existed for centuries and resulted in many injustices and controversies which scars and legacies are still apparent in contemporary societies. Trying to get people to empathize with the rage, fear and sorrow enslaved people experienced and raising awareness of the risks of the racist prejudices might help decreasing the amount of hate and apprehensions communities have against each other.

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