



The United States had fought a bloody **CIVIL WAR** over the issue of **SLAVERY** between 1860-65. The **NORTH** (who wanted to end slavery) **WON**. The **SOUTH** (who wanted to keep slavery) **LOST**. Many hoped this to be an end to the issue and seemed to declare all black Americans free..

The issue of **RACE** has always been highly important and indeed explosive in American society. Most African Americans are descended from **SLAVES** brought over to work in the Plantations of the **SOUTHERN STATES**. In the 1920's **12 million** African Americans lived in the USA. **75% lived in the South** 25% in the North. They faced **prejudice** in north and south but certainly the southern states had a deep seated **racism**

In 1865, a 13th **AMENDMENT** was made to the US **CONSTITUTION** formally **abolishing slavery**

HOWEVER, the reality for **Black Americans** was very different! Far from being free, many were more oppressed than ever!

PLESSY VERSUS FERGUSON DECISION
In 1896, these types of practices were legally challenged in the famous case of **PLESSY VERSUS FERGUSON**. This tried to argue that segregation went against the key rights of every American. **HOWEVER**, the Supreme Court ruled that as long as facilities were **Separate BUT Equal**, then this was indeed supported. This therefore **REINFORCED** American discrimination.



The **SOUTHERN STATES** who had supported slavery and had fought a war to maintain it, found new ways to assert their control and domination over African Americans.

They knew that the **FEDERAL** system of government in the USA gave **STATES** a lot of freedoms to make their own laws. As such, they decided to make highly **discriminatory laws** restricting the rights and freedoms of **Black Americans**. These were called **JIM CROW LAWS**. They separated White and black Americans and placed them in separate housing areas. They also segregated parks, churches, cinemas, restaurants...

- EXAMPLES include:
- 1) **SEGREGATED SCHOOLING** with White and Black schools. Black schools were considerably under-resourced compared with white schools and illiteracy and poorer education were much more common among African Americans.
 - 2) **SEGREGATED PUBLIC SPACES**: such as Whites only parks or swimming pools.
 - 3) **CAFES AND RESTAURANTS** often had separated areas for Whites and Blacks.
 - 4) **PUBLIC TRANSPORT**- buses had separate areas at the back for black people. They were forced to give up their seats to whites if the bus was full.
 - 5) **FORBIDDEN** from serving on a **JURY**.
 - 6) **VOTING** was kept deliberately restricted. While African Americans were granted the vote this was then restricted in some states with rules that they had to recite a lot of the US constitution. Other states demanded a **poll tax** to be paid or **literacy tests**.
 - 7) The **GRANDFATHER CLAUSE** banned everyone whose grandfather was a slave.
 - 8) Many African Americans retained some of the **CUSTOMS** of slavery. They **would not look white people in the eye**, they would refer to them **deferentially**, they would enter people's houses by the **back door**.
 - 9) **ANTI-MISCEGENATION** - African Americans forbidden from marrying white people
 - 10) **LACK OF JUSTICE**- African Americans had little chance of justice. They weren't allowed to serve on juries so most juries were all white. judges were all white and some were in the KKK. Many police officers were in the KKK. Sometimes they were convicted when all the evidence showed they were innocent!

BACKGROUND

JIM CROW LAWS



CHALLENGES FACED BY AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE SOUTH

Economic challenges

KU KLUX KLAN

WHITE SUPREMACIST ORGANISATION
Originally set up after the South lost the US Civil war in 1865. It was refounded in 1915 in Stone Mountain, Georgia by William Simmons
- His aim was to 'Repurify' America
- They believed that WASP (WHITE ANGLO-SAXON PROTESTANT) Americans was superior and the black race inferior.
- They also had hatred for homosexuals, immigrants, Roman Catholics, Jews or people of other religions.



KKK TACTICS:
In the Southern states **ROPE LAW** was talked about as a way to intimidate black people. **LYNCHINGS** were common across the southern states with black Americans being hanged without any trial and without any crime. Some were accused of. Things like looking at a white woman.
- Nearly **1,500 African Americans** were lynched between 1900-1940
- The **American Congress** attempted to get this lynching stopped but was prevented from doing so by Southern politicians.
- The KKK also intervened when African Americans tried to resist. This was the case in **Tulsa, Oklahoma**, where over 1,200 African American homes were burnt down and 26 of them killed after trying to prevent a lynching.
The KKK would also try to intimidate through **burning crosses** placed in front of people's houses. They would also use **rape and murder**.
The Justice system in the South was also infiltrated by the KKK with senior police and even judges being members... justice was not possible.
The Klan would have meetings in which they wore **hooded** uniforms. Their membership was from a wide selection of backgrounds. They were led by a **GRAND DRAGON**.
They would have **KLONVERSATIONS** a secret coded language...



RISE AND FALL OF KKK
The KKK became immensely popular when refounded following the famous '**Birth of a Nation**' film which was impressive early cinema but portrayed the KKK as heroic and used thinly disguised racism.
It's membership rose to **5 million** members in 1920's
A **March** on Washington DC had **50,000** people attend
The organisation however began to decline rapidly following the **rape and murder of a teacher** in Indiana carried out by the Grand Dragon of the state.

SHARECROPPING
Many African Americans in the south faced immense economic hardship.
Sharecropping kept people tied to the land in a way which was barely better than slavery.
They would get a share of the profits only once harvest came. Thousands would suffer terribly in the 1920s due to poor harvests. This would lead to the Great Migration in which over 1 million would head north.
The agricultural depression saw 3/4 of a million lose their jobs and up to a million headed north to the growing towns and cities and all their opportunities.



African Americans were **poorly educated** due to the lack of finance, the poverty and the segregated schooling system. This made it much harder to get jobs

Due to prejudice and discrimination African Americans were often the **last to be employed** and the **first to be fired**. They lacked trade Union support, indeed many unions were hostile to them.

African Americans tended to work in poorly paid jobs with little chance of promotion. They were not able to benefit from the economic boom.