

## 4. FROM MARCUS GARVEY TO THE BROWN VS BOARD OF EDUCATION, 1920-1954

### a) The Postwar Years

As African American veterans returned home, white opposition to wartime gains intensified. In 1917 a white mob invaded the black community in East Saint Louis, Illinois, and killed hundreds of African Americans. During the same year, the U.S. Army summarily court-martialed a group of black soldiers and hanged 13 without the benefit of an appeal after a black battalion rioted in reaction to white harassment in Houston, Texas. After the war, many black soldiers in uniform were attacked or killed by whites attempting to enforce racial domination. During the 'Red Summer' of 1919, anti-black riots occurred in scores of cities including Longview, Texas; Washington, D.C.; and Chicago, Illinois. These attacks continued into the 1920s and made African Americans even more determined to militantly defend their rights.



College-educated blacks were still few in number, but they generally provided articulate political and cultural leadership. Black leaders were united in believing that blacks' wartime sacrifices entitled them to first-class citizenship. Younger African Americans exemplified a militant "New Negro" who demanded respect and full equality from America and refused to take no for an answer.

### b) Marcus Garvey

The most popular militant black nationalist leader during this period was **Marcus Mosiah Garvey** a Jamaican immigrant who established the *Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)*, an international organization, in 1914. The UNIA had two to four million members at its height. Garvey was an honest critic of racial injustice, who pleaded for black pride and identified with black working classes and the poor. His public appearances in New York's Madison Square Garden and elsewhere attracted tens of thousands of people.



Garvey (1887-1940), created a "Back to Africa" movement in the United States. He was born the youngest of 11 children in Saint Ann's Bay, Jamaica. He left school at the age of 14 to serve as a printer's apprentice. A few years later, he took a job at a printing company in Kingston, where in 1907 he led a printers' strike for higher wages. Garvey then traveled to South America and Central America. In 1912 he went to England, where he became interested in African history and culture. He returned to Jamaica in 1914 and shortly thereafter founded the UNIA and the African Communities League.

In 1916 Garvey moved to the United States and settled in New York City. There he incorporated the UNIA and started a weekly newspaper, the *Negro World*. A persuasive orator and author, Garvey urged American blacks to be proud of their race and preached their return to Africa, their ancestral homeland. To this end he founded the *Black Star Line* in 1919 to provide steamship transportation, and the *Negro Factories Corporation* to encourage black economic independence. Garvey attracted thousands of supporters and claimed two million members for the UNIA. He suffered a series of economic disasters, however, and in 1922 he was arrested for fraud. Garvey served as his own defense attorney at his trial, was convicted, and went to prison in 1925. His sentence was commuted two years later, but he was immediately deported to Jamaica.

Perhaps Garvey's most dramatic move was the founding of the *Black Star Line*. These were to be steamships sailing between Africa and the United States, carrying black people home to populate prosperous settlements in the motherland and bringing materials and products back for sale. The Black Star Line cost a fortune and was a total commercial and financial disaster. But the very daring of the concept inspired black people around the world to believe that a black person could undertake large-scale enterprises, whose capacity had been thought to be the exclusive province of whites.

Garvey's chauvinism attracted especially to West Indians, to working-class African Americans, and to others who were simply disillusioned with the unfilled promises of American democracy. The UNIA had thousands of members in hundreds of cities, and there were branches around the world. Garvey also made enemies: the liberal integrationists deplored his separatist rhetoric, and thought him a buffoon because of his fancy uniforms and royal court. A "Garvey Must Go" campaign on the part of the African-American elite, including Du Bois, resulted in Garvey's arrest and deportation to Jamaica.

Unable to resurrect the UNIA or regain his influence, Garvey moved to London, where he died in relative obscurity. In 1964, his body was returned to Jamaica where he was declared the country's first national hero.

"I asked 'Where is the black man's government? Where is his kingdom? Where is his president, his country and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?' I could not find them and then I declared, 'I will help make them.'

Marcus Garvey

☞ **For more, see:**

Fact sheet on Marcus Garvey : [http://www.africawithin.com/garvey/fact\\_sheet.htm](http://www.africawithin.com/garvey/fact_sheet.htm)

### c) The Father of Black History

**Carter G. Woodson**, who began adult life as a coal miner in West Virginia, is called the "Father of Black History" because he initiated publications and organizations to take seriously the investigation of the African-American experience. He founded the *Association for the Study of Negro Life and History* in 1915; *The Journal of Negro History* in 1916; Associated Publishers, to produce books on African-American life, in 1921; and, in 1926, Negro History Week, which has now become Black History Month.

Born December 19, 1875, in Virginia, to parents who had been slaves, Woodson attended Berea College, the University of Chicago, and Harvard University. At the latter institution he received in 1912 a Ph.D. in history. His major professor, Edward Channing, believed blacks had no history, which may have influenced Woodson's decision to devote his life to eliminating ignorance, correcting the historical records of its racist partiality, and promoting accurate black history.

Persistently rejected by philanthropists and foundations, Woodson worked sixteen to eighteen hours a day doing research, writing, editing, administering, publishing, lecturing, and promoting. He turned his own modest salary back to the association to help support it. He produced articles, books, reviews, and a major text book in 1922, *The Negro in Our History*. He pioneered in the use of census data, and wrote widely on the social history of African Americans, and, perhaps more than any other scholar, established that black people were major participants in American history. He was particularly interested in documenting the African-American story, and *The Journal of Negro History* regularly included major source materials as well as articles and essays.



"We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in history. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world, void of national bias, race, hate and religious prejudice."

Carter G. Woodson

 **For more, see:**

Association for the Study of African American Life and History : <http://www.asalh.org/woodsonbiosketch.html>

### d) The Harlem Renaissance

Marcus Garvey's career was part of the growth in racial pride and awareness that characterized the 1920s. During this period Harlem, a neighborhood in New York City, became the North's largest and the world's best-known African American community. It was the home of the Harlem Renaissance, a black cultural community of intellectuals, poets, novelists, actors, musicians, and painters. This community included Alain Locke, a Harvard graduate and Rhodes scholar, who was one of several black academics



who promoted African American and African culture. Other important figures were Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Claude McKay. Their work was publicized by white patrons and black newspaper and magazine editors and found a wide audience in the United States and Europe. Although Harlem was the most widely known center of U.S. black culture, the cultural renaissance flourished in other cities with substantial black populations such as Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

The growth of black communities in the North also led to greater black political influence. Black politicians were elected to many state and local offices in the North. In 1928 Chicago's Oscar DePriest became the first African American from outside the South to serve in Congress. Political organizations represented the interests of

both the emerging black middle class and those of less affluent blacks, an example of the racial pride and unity with which African Americans met white racism.

The Harlem Renaissance was successful in that it brought the Black experience clearly within the corpus of American cultural history. Not only through an explosion of culture, but on a sociological level, the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance is that it redefined how America, and the world, viewed the African-American population. The migration of southern Blacks to the north changed the image of the African-American from rural, undereducated peasants to one of urban, cosmopolitan sophistication. This new identity led to a greater social consciousness, and African-Americans became players on the world stage, expanding intellectual and social contacts internationally.

 **For more, see:**

Wikipedia :  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem\\_Renaissance](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harlem_Renaissance)

"Our poets have now stopped speaking for the Negro, they speak as Negroes."

Alain Locke

## e) The Negro Leagues



kept all black athletes from playing in organized baseball.

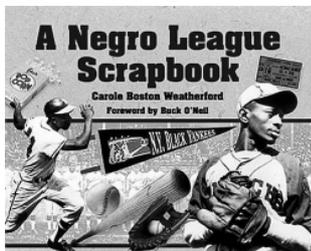
In response, the black baseball hero **Andrew "Rube" Foster** created the *Negro National League*. He was himself an excellent athlete, and his nickname was given after he outpitched the famous white player George "Rube" Waddell. But Foster was also a smart player. He is credited with inventing the infamous bunt-and-run play, and he insisted that team players play the game using their minds as well as their physical skills. His sharp business sense led him to bring together the other owners of successful black ball clubs in Kansas City in 1920. Together, these men wrote their own constitution and established the Negro National League (NNL).



The NNL was fairly successful in the beginning, with a consistent attendance record and a yearly income of \$200,000 in 1923. Because of the success, an Eastern Colored League (ECL) was organized in 1924, also loyally supported by African-American fans.

The Negro leagues suffered from problems with acquiring referees. Many black players and coaches were offended by the presence of white referees, and blacks were not allowed to umpire. The most frustrating problem for the leagues was the inconsistency and irregularity of game schedules. Few black teams owned their own stadiums (ballparks), so club owners were forced to cooperate with white businessmen in order to have a "home" ballpark. Also, if weather or a no-show canceled a game, it was virtually impossible to reschedule. As a result, some teams played substantially fewer games than others, which caused a great deal of tension between both teams and leagues.

In 1930, Rube Foster, recognized as the Father of Black Baseball, died. With his absence, the leagues separated, and the *Great Depression* tightened its economic grip around the already suffering black teams. But the emergence of independent teams kept black baseball alive during the Depression and produced some of the greatest players, ever. They included **Leroy "Satchel" Paige**, who played successfully against white peers.



Gus Greenlee, a black man from Pittsburgh, established in 1933 the second Negro National League. He developed the idea of the East-West All-Star Game, which became black baseball's biggest event. Black newspapers questioned their readers to determine which players would participate in the game. Each year hundreds of thousands of fans voted for their favorite players, and tens of thousands traveled to Chicago, where the All-Star Game was always held, to attend the biggest event of the year.

Integration had exhausted the Negro leagues of many of their star athletes. Interest in Negro league baseball began seriously to wane. Some historians reflect that integration ultimately happened for financial considerations for the white leagues as well as a testimony for civil rights. The final East-West All-Star Game for the declining Negro leagues was held in 1963 in Kansas City, where Rube Foster had organized the first black professional baseball league.

"Back then any proud black man courageous enough to take his position on the baseball diamond quickly realized it was seventeen men against one."

Alain Locke

"If a black boy can make it on Okinawa and Guadalcanal, he can make it in baseball."

A.B. "Happy" Chandler

 **For more, see:**

History of Negro league baseball:

<http://www.negroleaguebaseball.com/history101.html>

Negro leagues legacy:

[http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/history/mlb\\_negro\\_leagues.jsp](http://mlb.mlb.com/mlb/history/mlb_negro_leagues.jsp)



## f) The Great Depression

The African American cultural renaissance lost momentum in the 1930s as people focused on the Great Depression, a worldwide economic recession that began in 1929. Even before the depression, unemployment and poverty among blacks were high, but the economic crisis devastated black communities. The economy was bad for everyone—17 percent of whites could not support themselves by 1934. Yet, 38 percent of African Americans were unable to support themselves by that year because large numbers of blacks were often fired to make room for unemployed white workers. African Americans lost their jobs at a much higher rate than whites and remained out of work longer. In some black communities 80 percent of the people were on relief, receiving surplus food, clothing, and other aid from the government, and black unemployment ranged as high as 60 percent.



The falling standard of living for African Americans was more drastic than for their fellow white citizens. The median annual black family income in Harlem dropped by nearly half between 1929 and 1932, and wage levels were lower for blacks than for whites. Businesses took advantage of the situation. One Philadelphia laundry, for example, advertised for black female workers at \$9 to \$10 weekly and for white female workers at \$12. At the same time, Harlem landlords could charge rents of \$12 to \$30 a month, higher than comparable housing elsewhere, because Harlem was one of the few places where blacks could live.

But since the depression hit both blacks and whites, it made interracial action and reform more real. Unemployed veterans of World War I, both black and white, organized the *Bonus Expeditionary Force* to protest economic conditions. About 20,000 veterans took part in the **Bonus March** on Washington in the spring and summer of 1932, demanding early payment of their veteran's benefits. In the South, black and white tenant farmers and sharecroppers worked together to demand fair treatment and a greater share of farm profits. A few blacks were drawn to the Communist Party when it recruited their support and ran a black candidate, **James Ford**, for vice-president in 1932, 1936, and 1940.

The labor movement was another area where blacks and whites worked together. All-black organizations, such as the *Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters*, led by A. Philip Randolph, worked with the industrial unions that joined the interracial *Congress of Industrial Organizations* (CIO) to forge a new, more militant labor movement. Labor unions played an important role in forming the *National Negro Congress*, headed by Randolph, which was organized to promote black economic interests.



### ☞ For more, see:

Race relations in the 1930s and the 1940s: <http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/depwwii/race/race.html>

Pictures of the Great Depression: <http://afroamhistory.about.com/od/people/ig/Great-Depression/>

## g) The New Deal

To counteract the effects of the Great Depression, President Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated a domestic program called the **New Deal**. Roosevelt's New Deal was a series of government programs designed to adjust the economy in ways that would increase employment. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt encouraged the organization of a '*Black Cabinet*' composed of notable African Americans to help form New Deal programs.

Generally these black advisers were not politicians but community leaders, such as educator **Mary McLeod Bethune**, social worker Lawrence A. Oxley, and poet Frank S. Horne. Some held official positions in the Roosevelt administration. William H. Hastie, dean of the Howard University Law School, was appointed assistant solicitor in the Department of the Interior and later became aide to the Secretary of War. Ralph Bunche worked in the State Department, and Bethune was director of the Division of Negro Affairs of the National Youth Administration. By the mid-1930s, Roosevelt had appointed 45 African Americans to serve in his New Deal agencies.



The New Deal had mixed results in the black community. Federal programs provided financial aid to desperately poor blacks, jobs for many, and government-financed housing. Some black workers benefited from administration efforts to protect industrial workers when New Deal policies guaranteed unions the right to strike. Many more benefited from consumer strikes and boycotts that black leaders organized to force white businesses to hire black workers. In New York, Chicago, Washington, D.C., and other cities, thousands of blacks participated in "*Don't Buy Where You Can't Work*" campaigns. In New York's Harlem, for example, boycotts led to many more clerical, sales, and executive jobs for African Americans.

Working together during the New Deal strengthened long-standing alliances between blacks and white liberals. These alliances were a foundation for following civil rights reforms.

Yet, New Deal programs maintained racial segregation, especially in the South, and by the end of Roosevelt's second term, black unemployment was still extremely high. Further, the Roosevelt administration was unwilling to confront the legal segregation faced by Southern blacks, and New Deal programs did not help those hurt by the decline in agricultural prices.



The *Agricultural Adjustment Administration* (AAA) aided farm owners but did little for farm workers, some of whom were fired when the federal government provided financial encouragements to reduce farm production.

The *Social Security Act* brought assistance to many workers, but it excluded farmers and domestics (65 percent of all African American workers). Similarly, the mass of black workers were not covered by National Recovery Administration codes. Additionally, many federal housing programs perpetuated residential segregation. Roosevelt also declined to support proposed federal legislation against lynching and did little to lighten discrimination against blacks in federal social programs.

One of the most dramatic developments that took place during the 1930s was the repositioning of black voters. Blacks in large numbers switched their votes to the Democratic Party, deserting the Republican Party, the party of Lincoln that blacks had supported since Reconstruction. This shift took place partly as a result of blacks' involvement in labor unions that generally supported the Democrats, and partly in response to Republican efforts to attract Southern segregationists. By the 1934 congressional elections, two years after Roosevelt won the presidency, most blacks voted Democratic for the first time.



During the 1930s, the NAACP led a vigorous legal battle against discrimination, concentrating on ways to end legal segregation, especially in education. The legal strategy for this battle was formulated by Charles Houston, former dean of the Howard University Law School, and **Thurgood Marshall**, a former student of Houston's. The NAACP focused on the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* Supreme Court decision which had allowed separate facilities for blacks as long as they were equal to those provided for whites. Since they were almost never equal, the NAACP attempted to force Southern states to make them so.

The NAACP gained an initial victory in 1938 when the U.S. Supreme Court ordered the admission of a black man to the University of Missouri law school because the state had failed to provide such facilities for blacks. The next year, attacks on legal segregation were intensified as the NAACP Legal Defense Fund was created, and Marshall became its director.

Blacks and their white allies demonstrated their determination to fight segregation when the *Daughters of the American Revolution* (membership organization of women dedicated to promoting historic preservation, education, and patriotism) refused to allow internationally acclaimed black singer **Marian Anderson** to appear at Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C. In protest, civil rights advocates arranged for Anderson to give an outdoor concert at the Lincoln Memorial. The symbolism was clear to over 75,000 blacks and whites who attended the concert on Easter Sunday 1939.



"Throughout the nation men and women, forgotten in the political philosophy of the Government, look to us here for guidance and for more equitable opportunity to share in the distribution of national wealth... I pledge you, I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people [...] This is more than a political campaign. It is a call to arms."

Franklin D. Roosevelt

### ☞ For more, see:

African American Odyssey: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aahtml/exhibit/aopart8b.html>

Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute's New Deal page :  
<http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1998/4/98.04.04.x.html#d>

## h) The Scottsboro Boys



On March 25, 1931, near Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, a fight broke out on a freight train running from Chattanooga to Memphis. The nation was well into its most serious economic depression, and thousands of homeless and out-of-work hobos all over the country rode the rails looking for work or just staying on the move. The fight was between a group of young white men and young black men. The blacks won and threw the whites off the train. Local law enforcement was informed and the train was stopped at the Paint Rock, Alabama, depot.

Two young white women were also riding the boxcars: Ruby Bates, aged seventeen, and Victoria Price, twenty-one. They were prostitutes who had been in trouble with the law and were afraid of suffering new charges. Bates had once been arrested for "hugging a Negro." Apparently, they were asked if the black men had "bothered" them, and Price affirmed they had been repeatedly raped. Nine young black men, aged thirteen to eighteen, were quickly rounded up from various sections of the train, and taken to the jail at Scottsboro, Alabama, the nearby Jackson County seat. Word of the incident spread, a lynch mob immediately gathered, and the young men were saved from almost certain murder by the protective pressure of 120 National Guardsmen. The nine became known as the Scottsboro Boys, partly because, they were teenagers, but mainly because the white South always referred to black males of all ages as "boys" as a mark of disrespect and means of control.

In less than two weeks, the youths had been tried and sentenced to death for rape. These young men were poor, uneducated, and unemployed: one was nearly blind, and another seriously ill with syphilis. Most were strangers to each other before their arrest. Virtually no defense was made at their trial. Bates and Price showed no physical signs of rape. Many white Southerners wanted them lynched, while the more fair-minded believed that the very fact that there was a trial testified to the validity of the Southern legal system, despite an automatic supposition of guilt. It was all so patently unjust, however, that two groups came to the young men's side, the *International Labor Defense* (ILD) and the *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People* (NAACP).

The two organizations could not have been more unlike, and they symbolized basic differences in thinking about how to approach the problems of American racism and injustice. The ILD was essentially a white Communist body, and its critics believed it was using the Scottsboro case as a radical device to influence the masses. The NAACP was essentially black and reformist, fearful of losing its respectability, and opposed to public protest, which it felt was counterproductive. Walter White of the NAACP thought the ILD really, wanted the Scottsboro defendants dead so it could show murdered martyrs. The ILD thought the NAACP's moderate reformism, merely delayed the inevitable revolution of the people.

The ILD took over the defense, partly because it was an active, aggressive, and well-financed organization, partly because it won the confidence of the defendants and their mothers, partly because of the NAACP's foot-dragging and timidity. The ILD secured **Samuel Liebowitz** of New York, probably the best criminal lawyer in the country, as the youths' defender. Despite brilliant legal work on his part, however, he and his clients were defeated in and by the Southern courts. Many observers in fact called the trial a "legal lynching." Liebowitz was shocked at the deliberate racism of the system, and sympathetic whites in the North became aware of deep-seated institutionalized Southern intolerance. The cases were appealed and retried.



Scottsboro became a national cause. Ruby Bates retracted her story and joined the defense. The Supreme Court intervened because there had not been a black on an Alabama jury roll since Reconstruction. In 1935, a new defense committee was formed under the leadership of Allan Knight Chalmers, the minister of Broadway Tabernacle, an old white abolitionist church in New York. Through it all, the defendants stayed in jail, often mercilessly beaten, constantly mistreated, and denied even their basic rights as prisoners. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt intervened behind the scenes politically. Chalmers finally arranged with Alabama Governor Bibb Graves a secret deal for the defendants' pardon, but Graves broke his promise at the last minute.

What was Scottsboro about? It was really about racism and how racism dehumanizes both blacks and whites alike. It was about a criminal justice system based on intolerance rather than even elementary fairness. It was about the split between moderates and radicals with regard to how to change America. Mostly, however, Scottsboro seems to support James Baldwin's notion that racism is basically about sex, especially white fantasies about black sexuality, fantasies held by white men and women alike. In one of the trials, one of the prosecution lawyers said if the Scottsboro youths were freed, every white woman in the South would have to wear a revolver "to protect the sacred parts of her body."

"We have been sentenced to die for something we ain't never done [...] for the reason that we is workers and the color of our skin is black."  
*The Scottsboro Boys*

☞ **For more, see:**

"The Scottsboro Boys" Trials: <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/Ftrials/scottsboro/scottsboro.htm>  
 Scottsboro: an American Tragedy: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/scottsboro/>

## i) World War II



In the late 1930s and the early 1940s, the attention of African Americans focused on events in Europe (rise of dictators, Germany's invasion of Eastern Europe, and Italy's invasion of Ethiopia). Blacks protested Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and raised funds for Ethiopian support. Black newspapers ran stories about the invasion, and the *Pittsburgh Courier* sent its own correspondent to North Africa to cover the story.

African Americans were also quick to recognize the danger of Nazism and its theories of Aryan superiority. To many, it resembled the segregationist rhetoric of the American South. At the Berlin Olympics of 1936, black track star **Jesse Owens** carried the pride of nonwhites as he symbolically confronted Hitler's theories. In races against Germans and other Europeans, Owens won four gold medals.

By the end of 1940, France had fallen to Hitler's forces, and Germany, Italy, and Japan had formed an alliance. Within a year, Japan had moved into China and Southeast Asia. The United States imposed trade sanctions on Japan, but these failed to restrain Japan's expansion. On Sunday morning December 7, 1941, Japan attacked American forces stationed at Pearl Harbor and other U.S. military facilities on Oahu in the Hawaiian Islands. A black mess attendant aboard the USS West Virginia, **Dorie Miller**, was among those later cited for distinction during the battle. In the heat of battle, he pulled his wounded captain to safety. Although he had never fired a machine gun before, Miller shot down as many as four attacking planes, for which he later received the Navy Cross for heroism.



When the war began in Europe in 1937, there were only about 5,000 black enlisted men and fewer than a dozen black officers in the regular army. Before the war ended in 1945, more than a million black men and about 4,000 black women had served in the armed forces. Nearly half served abroad, most in Europe and North Africa, but thousands also served in the Pacific. African Americans served in all branches of the military during the war.

In 1941 the 99th Pursuit Squadron, the first black combat unit in the Army Air Corps, was established in Tuskegee, Alabama. More than 600 black pilots trained for this highly decorated unit. They completed more than 500 missions in the first year of America's involvement in the war. Over 80 were decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross for combat over France, Germany, North Africa, and Eastern Europe.



Yet even as blacks participated in the war abroad, black military troops suffered all too familiar discrimination at home. In 1941, 100 African American officers were arrested for protesting the whites-only policy of the officer's club at Freeman Field in Indiana. In 1943 William Hastie, aide to the U.S. Secretary of War, resigned his office to protest racial discrimination in the armed forces.

By 1940 American factories were hiring new workers for war production, finally relieving the depression's selective unemployment. But blacks benefited less than white workers from rising employment and increased wages. Discrimination in employment and wage policies continued to create disadvantages for black workers.

Early in 1941, A. Philip Randolph met with Roosevelt administration officials to demand equal employment for blacks in industries working under federal government defense contracts. He threatened to lead 100,000 African Americans in a march on Washington, D.C., to protest job discrimination. Negotiations were heated, but finally Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802 forbidding discrimination based on race, religion, color, or national origin in the employment of workers for defense industries with federal contracts. The order also established a *Fair Employment Practices Committee* (FEPC) to oversee the implementation of the order. Roosevelt's actions immediately opened thousands of steady well-paying jobs to black workers and encouraged a new flow of migration from the South to Northern cities.

The need for labor opened factory work to women and drew large numbers from the domestic jobs many had taken during the worst days of the depression. Working in war industries, black women found that the pay was better and the work was generally less physically demanding than domestic work. Also many black women who had lost domestic jobs to white women during the 1930s now returned to take those jobs as whites left them. African American men and women fully engaged in the war effort were determined to pursue a 'Double V Campaign,' victory over fascism abroad and victory over racism at home. Consequently, the movement of civil rights protest quickened during the mid-1940s.

 **For more, see:**

African-Americans in World War II:

<http://www.negroleaguebaseball.com/history101.html>

Pictures of African Americans During World War II:

<http://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/ww2-pictures/>



## j) Postwar Civil Rights Activities

The struggle against Hitler's theories of racial supremacy led some whites in the United States to accept racial equality. This acceptance was strengthened by the writings of numerous researchers, including the Swedish economist Gunnar Myrdal, author of *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944). Other academic and literary publications increased whites' understanding of the black experience, notably the novel *Native Son* (1940) by Richard Wright; *Black Metropolis* (1945), an important sociological study by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton; and *From Slavery to Freedom* (1947) by historian John Hope Franklin.

Capitalizing increasingly liberal racial attitudes, the interracial *Congress of Racial Equality* (CORE), formed in 1942, conducted nonviolent sit-ins and demonstrations in Chicago, New York, and other Northern cities throughout the 1940s. These sit-ins braved racial segregation and had some success at integrating public accommodations such as restaurants. Supreme Court rulings in the 1940s eliminated many methods of segregation. In 1944 the court outlawed Southern Democrats' white primaries, denying their argument that the party was a private club and primary elections were open to club members only. In 1946 it ruled that segregation in interstate bus travel was unconstitutional, and in 1947 it disallowed racial discrimination in the federal civil service.

The late 1940s also saw the color barrier fall in many areas of society that had been all white. One of the most dramatic instances occurred in 1947, when **Jackie Robinson** joined the Brooklyn Dodgers, becoming the first black to play major league baseball in the 20th century. In 1949 **Wesley A. Brown** became the first African American to graduate from the U.S. Naval Academy.



Following the war, the GI Bill, funded by the government, gave new educational opportunities to veterans and promised greater economic prosperity. Blacks were determined to be included. Thousands of black veterans enrolled in technical training or colleges and universities, financed by government benefits. The number of African American students increased from 124,000 in 1947 to 233,000 in 1961.

African Americans continued to migrate from the rural South to the urban North to improve their economic status. From 1948 to 1961, the proportion of blacks with low incomes (earning below \$3,000 a year) declined from 78% to 47%; at the same time the proportion earning over \$10,000 a year increased from under 1% to 17%. Although black income improved, it remained far below that of whites. Black median income in 1961 was still lower than white median income had been in 1948.

Whites reacted violently to the wartime movement of blacks to urban areas in the North and the West. By the late 1940s, as the black percentage of city populations increased, more and more whites moved to the new suburbs that often restricted black residence. Conflicts between black workers and white workers over housing and jobs developed in some cities. In Detroit in 1943, for example, 25 blacks and 9 whites died in a race riot before federal troops restored order.

## k) Black Gospel Music



One of the early formative giants of gospel was **Arizona Dranes**, a blind and impoverished Texas pianist and singer who recorded in the late 1920s. A sanctified member of the Church of God in Christ, her fast piano-playing combined white march music and African rhythms with a sporting-house ragtime beat. Her singing of songs like "*Lamb's Blood Has Washed Me Clean*" approached ecstatic frenzy.

The great catalyst of black gospel music was **Thomas A. "Georgia Tom" Dorsey**, a musical genius who wed black and white evangelistic music to the blues. He was the piano accompanist to both Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith, and the composer of the blues classic "*It's Tight Like That*" recorded with Tampa Red. Converted in Chicago's Pilgrim Baptist Church, Dorsey went on to create another masterpiece, "*Precious Lord, Take My Hand*." As Anthony Heilbut points out, Dorsey is a living link between the old blues singer Blind Lemon Jefferson and modern popular music.

Like jazz, black gospel entered the musical mainstream when whites adapted and popularized it. But the genealogy is clear. Elvis Presley heard and was influenced by black gospel at the East Trigg Baptist Church in Memphis, where the great Queen C. Anderson was the leading soloist, and whose pastor, W. Herbert Brewster, wrote "*Move On Up a Little Higher*." Presley sold a million records of Dorsey's "*Peace in the Valley*," but the full story of popular music's roots in black gospel is yet to be written.



There are familiar names in black gospel music: James Cleveland, Sister Rosetta Tharp, the Five Blind Boys, Willie Mae Rose Smith, the Dixie Hummingbirds, Clara Ward. But there are many other important artists less well known: Robert Anderson, Alex Bradford, Roberta Martin, Sallie Martin. There are great songs: "Stand By Me," "Old Ship of Zion," "How I Got Over," "Ain't No Grave Can Hold My Body Down," Dorothy Love Coates' "My Soul's on Fire and the World Can't Harm Me." Despite commercialization and acculturation, the black Protestant folk church continues to produce songs and singers that carry this vital and animated culture.

## I) The Cold War



The growing black population in Northern cities provided decisive support for liberal Democratic candidates who in turn backed civil rights reforms. Race became an important issue in postwar politics. In 1947 the NAACP presented a petition to the United Nations. It documented the history of racism in America and was discussed for two days by the UN Human Rights Commission. President **Harry S. Truman** created a Presidential Commission on Civil Rights. In response to pressure by black leaders, President Truman issued executive orders designed to eventually desegregate the armed forces and prevent discrimination in federal employment.

Southern Democrats were angered by Truman's actions and by Northern Democrats' adoption of a strong civil rights plank in the 1948 Democratic Party platform. They split from the Democratic Party and formed the States' Rights Party, whose members were known as **Dixiecrats**

The Cold War, which began during the Truman administration, also became a factor in postwar race relations. During the Cold War, the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) engaged in an intense economic and political struggle for the allegiance of people around the world. As part of the Cold War, the United States began a campaign against Communism, the economic system of the USSR, both at home and abroad. The anti-Communist campaign had a mixed impact on black America.

In the world arena, the United States presented itself as the champion of freedom and democracy against the totalitarianism of Soviet Communism. The United States was embarrassed by its denial of rights to African Americans. Supporting black rights and appointing African Americans to major governmental positions reinforced America's claims.

At home, however, the campaign against Communism resulted in efforts to identify and prosecute Communists. From 1951 to 1954, Senator **Joseph McCarthy** and his Senate subcommittee investigated allegations of Communist activities. McCarthy charged many accomplished Americans with disloyalty, including black singer Paul Robeson and W.E.B. Du Bois. Such activities made it harder for people to express political dissent and to support progressive organizations for labor and black rights.



☞ **For more, see:**

Cold War Civil Rights: <http://mdudziak.com/cwcr.aspx>

## m) The Precursor of the Civil Rights Movement

**Benjamin Mays** was teacher, model and inspiration for many of the people who participated actively in the Civil Rights Movement. Coretta Scott King told him in 1981, "Most of the black leadership in our country during the last forty years has in some way been inspired by you .... Martin Luther King, Jr. called you his spiritual mentor."



Born August 1, 1895, Benjamin Mays hardly exaggerated when he claimed he came out of his mother's womb kicking against segregation and discrimination. In fact, his earliest memory was of a white lynch mob in Greenwood County, South Carolina, in 1898. He never forgot it, and his whole life was lived in response to it. The title he chose for his autobiography, *Born to Rebel*, reveals the spirit of a man who managed to free himself from the prison, of racism by a combination of remarkable personal bravery and a deep passion for education.

Mays' story is the account of daily black life in the South after whites brought a violent end to Reconstruction and before the Civil Rights Movement established black freedom. The brutality of racism can scarcely be imagined by those who did not live through it. It was a total social, economic, and cultural system bent on maintaining white supremacy through everything from the dishonest exploitation of tenant farmers (like Mays' family) to the constant psychological humiliation of Jim Crow. There was no alternative in the courts, the ballot, the federal government, the churches, the press, or anywhere else.

The year Mays started school, Greenwood County expended \$6.29 annually for the education of each white child, and 23 cents for each black child. He cleaned outhouses for \$6.00 a month to pay his schooling at Orangeburg State College's high school, from which he graduated at the age of twenty-one. He was fifty-two years old (and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago) before he was allowed to vote.

While there was virtually no escape from racism, there were survival techniques. More than once, he came close to being mobbed for insisting on his rights. He found ways to maintain his integrity: he walked up flights of stairs to avoid segregated elevators; blacks were allowed only on elevators designed for freight.



Mays reported on one aspect of Southern racism that is still little discussed: sexuality. He was taught to avoid white women totally, since the slightest hint of rudeness (as defined by the women) could mean lynching. At the same time, black women were entirely at the mercy of white men. Black fathers often refused to permit their daughters to work for white farmers, go anywhere unless they were accompanied by a brother, or work in white homes under any circumstances.

Given this background, Mays' career is all the more remarkable: Baptist pastor; executive secretary of the Tampa Urban League; dean of the School of Religion at Howard University; vice president of the National Council of Churches; president of the Atlanta School Board; and the position he held for twenty-seven years and for which he is best known, president of Morehouse College in Atlanta.

Mays was a liberal in religion, a gentleman who always put personal integrity first, a teacher who never compromised high standards, an administrator who believed a college's primary task is to build character. There is no way of counting the people for whom Benjamin Mays was a role model. And it is no mystery why he was called the "*Schoolmaster of the Civil Rights Movement*."



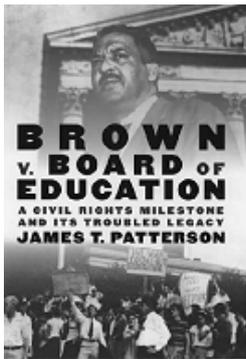
 **For more, see:**

Benjamin E. Mays quotes:

[http://thinkexist.com/quotes/benjamin\\_e.\\_mays/](http://thinkexist.com/quotes/benjamin_e._mays/)

"It must be borne in mind that the tragedy of life does not lie in not reaching your goal. The tragedy of life lies in having no goal to reach."  
Benjamin Mays

## n) The Brown Decision



During the 1940s and 1950s, NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall directed a carefully constructed legal campaign against Southern segregation laws. These laws separated blacks and whites in such areas of public life as schools, restaurants, drinking fountains, bus stations, and public transportation. The NAACP focused on segregation in education, and won a number of court victories, culminating in the Supreme Court's ruling in 1954 in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*. This ruling declared that separate facilities were inherently unequal and therefore unconstitutional, thus reversing the 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* ruling.

However, President Dwight D. Eisenhower did not support a strong federal role in enforcing desegregation, an attitude that encouraged Southern resistance. State troopers were used in Texas to prevent integration; people who supported integration risked losing their jobs; and segregationists set off bombs in Tennessee and Alabama. In a 'Southern Manifesto,' 101 congressmen promised to resist integration.

Meanwhile, after three years of negotiation, the black community and the school board in Little Rock, Arkansas, devised a plan to enroll nine black students at Central High School. When the plan was implemented in the fall of 1957, Governor Orval Faubus used the National Guard to block the black students from entering the school. The public outcry forced Eisenhower to act. He put the National Guard under federal direction and sent federal troops to enforce the Brown decision and protect the students from white mobs. Nevertheless, the following year, Faubus closed all of Little Rock's high schools rather than integrate them. Ten years after the Brown decision, less than two percent of Southern black children attended integrated schools.

Whites in many areas of the South organized private white schools rather than accept integration. In 1959 officials in Prince Edward County, Virginia, moved white students and state education funds to hastily organized white private schools. For four years, until privately funded black schools could be organized, black students in the county had no schools. Finally in 1963 the county complied with court rulings and reopened the public schools. During the early 1960s, it was necessary to maintain federal troops and marshals on the University of Mississippi campus to ensure the right of a black student to attend classes.



 **For more, see:**

Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown\\_v.\\_Board\\_of\\_Education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_v._Board_of_Education)