

SEGREGATION IN AMERICA

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INTRODUCTION

America's history of racial inequality continues to haunt us. The genocide of Native people, 250-year enslavement of Black people, adoption of "racial integrity laws" that demonized ethnic immigrants and people of color, and enforcement of policies and practices designed to perpetuate white supremacy are all part of our difficult past. This country has witnessed great triumph, innovation, and progress, but we are burdened by a painful history that we have yet to adequately acknowledge.

In the 1950s and 1960s, heroic civil rights activists staged a valiant revolt against racial inequality that compelled our nation to change some of its most racially offensive practices and policies. The Civil Rights Movement profoundly changed the character of American society and opened doors for people of color that had too long been barred by bigotry and ignorance. There has been substantial progress on a range of issues as a result of increased participation by non-white people in the political process. Diversity has become a demand that has strengthened the political, social, cultural, and economic landscape in significant and visible ways.

But the Civil Rights Movement also triggered mass opposition. In response to demands for equal rights, millions of white Americans made clear their determined, unwavering, and committed opposition to racial equality, integration, and civil rights. This entrenched commitment to white supremacy inspired an often violent rejection of racial justice that is frequently overlooked. Understanding the opposition to racial equality is the focus of this report because it is central to confronting the continuing challenges of racial inequality today.

The United States is still compromised by widespread racial bias and bigotry. We are still infected with false narratives of racial difference that marginalize and create hatred, prejudice, and discrimination against many people of color. Black and brown people are burdened with a presumption of guilt and dangerousness that is evident in myriad ways.

Enormous racial disparities in our criminal justice system, education, health, and employment reflect continuing problems that cannot be fully understood without a closer examination of the civil rights era. It was during this era that law enforcement agencies aligned themselves with opponents of racial equality and became the face of violent resistance to integration and voting rights. The struggle for racial justice was blocked by uniformed police who were hostile and often violent in their opposition to peaceful efforts for equality. It is impossible to fully comprehend the tensions between many communities of color and the police today without a deeper appreciation of this history.

Over the last 50 years, our political, social, and cultural institutions accommodated and embraced elected officials, journalists, and white leaders who espoused virulently racist ideologies. White segregationists were not banished or shamed; they were respected and elected to some of the highest levels of national authority long after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The accommodation of people who proudly proclaimed racist ideology and white supremacy implicates these institutions and undermines the notion that racial equality has been achieved.

EJI believes that our forward progress, our future promise of a healthier and more just society cannot be achieved until we confront our history of racial inequality. We believe our nation is in desperate need of truth and reconciliation — and we are persuaded that process is sequential. We must first tell the truth about our past before we can overcome it.

This is the third report in a series on America's history of racial injustice. In 2013, we issued *Slavery in America*, which focused on the domestic slave trade and its legacy. That research and work inspired us to build the **Legacy Museum: From Enslavement to Mass Incarceration**, in Montgomery, Alabama. In 2015, we published *Lynching in America: Confronting the Legacy of Racial Terror*, which inspired another new cultural space in Montgomery, the **National Memorial for Peace and Justice**. We hope you'll visit these spaces to learn more about the history of racial inequality in America.

Segregation in America is a critical piece of the narrative of American history. It details an especially dynamic time when the character of America and our difficult history of racial injustice was on painful display. It was also a time of great hope for many people in this country who believed we could overcome that history and create a truly just society. That hope has inspired us to re-examine this era so that we might better understand the challenges facing us all as the struggle for racial equality in America continues.

FROM SLAVERY TO SEGREGATION

Today, the story of the American Civil Rights Movement is familiar: courageous activists waged an epic struggle, faced great risks, and suffered tragic losses to achieve victories that forever changed the nation. Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott; the murder of Emmett Till; the Selma to Montgomery March; and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968 are well-known milestones in the movement.

In contrast, the story of national opposition to civil rights is muddled and incomplete. If civil rights activists' efforts constituted a soaring chorus of *We Shall Overcome*, hundreds of thousands of white opponents responded with a deafening shout: "No you will not!"

White Americans concentrated in the South and influential throughout the country conducted a widespread, organized, and determined campaign to defend their "way of life" against the "burden of integration."¹ Racist politicians enjoyed support from the majority of white voters; the Ku Klux Klan claimed many of the South's most prominent and powerful citizens as members;² and white perpetrators of vicious attacks on Black people were regularly acquitted by all-white juries.³

Understanding this opposition to civil rights can help us address its legacy today.



Men and boys pose beneath the body of Lige Daniels, a Black man, shortly after he was lynched on August 3, 1920, in Center, Texas. (James Allen, ed., et al., *Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America* (Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Publishers, 2000), 117-118.)

A LYNCHING AND ITS LEGACY

On February 7, 1904, a Black man and woman were tortured and killed in Sunflower County, Mississippi, as hundreds of white people watched and cheered. The man, Luther Holbert, was accused of fatally shooting James Eastland, a white landowner from a prominent and wealthy family. Eastland's brothers, Woods and Hiram, led the posse that captured Holbert as he fled with a Black woman whose name was not reported.⁴

Eyewitnesses reported that members of the mob prepared funeral pyres while Luther Holbert and the Black woman, each tied to a tree, watched. They were forced to hold out their hands as their fingers were chopped off, one at a time, and distributed as souvenirs. Then their ears were cut off and handed out as prizes. Holbert was beaten until his skull fractured and one eye hung from its socket. Mob members then used a large corkscrew to bore into their arms, legs, and torsos, pulling out large pieces of flesh before throwing both victims on the fire to burn to death. The event was described as festive, with 600 spectators enjoying deviled eggs, lemonade, and whiskey.⁵

Later that year, Woods Eastland named his newborn son for his slain brother.⁶ James Oliver Eastland, the privileged son of a wealthy plantation-owning white family on the Mississippi Delta, became a lawyer and the state's longest serving United States senator. Eastland committed his 36-year Senate career to maintaining white supremacy. From 1942 to 1978, he defended Mississippi's deeply rooted racial caste system and led the virulent white opposition to school desegregation, Black voting rights, and racial equality.

For a generation of white Americans who bitterly fought civil rights progress, Eastland and leaders like him linked the era of racial terror in which they were born to the era of inequality and Jim Crow segregation.

THE CREATION OF JIM CROW

Long before the mid-20th century, the South earned a reputation as a white supremacist stronghold with a deeply entrenched racial hierarchy; legal, political, and economic systems designed to perpetuate racial inequality; and a willingness to maintain that system through any means necessary.

On the eve of the Civil War, 90 percent of America's Black population was enslaved, and those 3.9 million enslaved Black people were held in the South.⁷

When shifting national sentiment threatened federal interference with slavery, South Carolina seceded from the Union to form the Confederacy in December 1860, and the Civil War began in April 1861.⁸ Four years later, the rebels were defeated, Black people were emancipated, and white Southerners began rebuilding a society that recreated white supremacy.

During Reconstruction, violence, lynchings, and large scale massacres were used to maintain white control. “How many Black men and women were beaten, flogged, mutilated, and murdered in the first years of emancipation will never be known,” wrote historian Leon F. Litwack.⁹ After federal troops withdrew, racial terror lynchings by white mobs terrorized millions of Black people, and more than 4000 were killed between 1877 and 1950, mostly in the South. Enabled by the indifference of federal officials and Northern states, this violence traumatized the Black community for generations.¹⁰

Transitioning from enslavement to legalized white supremacy required a new legal architecture. In the 1890s, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Louisiana adopted new state constitutions that denied Black people the vote, reflecting segregationists’ conviction that “[w]e can trust white men to do right by their inferior race, but we cannot trust the inferior race with power over the white man.”¹¹ In 1901, Alabama followed suit and held a constitutional convention “to establish white supremacy in this state.”¹²

With white control of state and local government restored, lawmakers passed legislation that required racial separation in major and mundane areas of life.

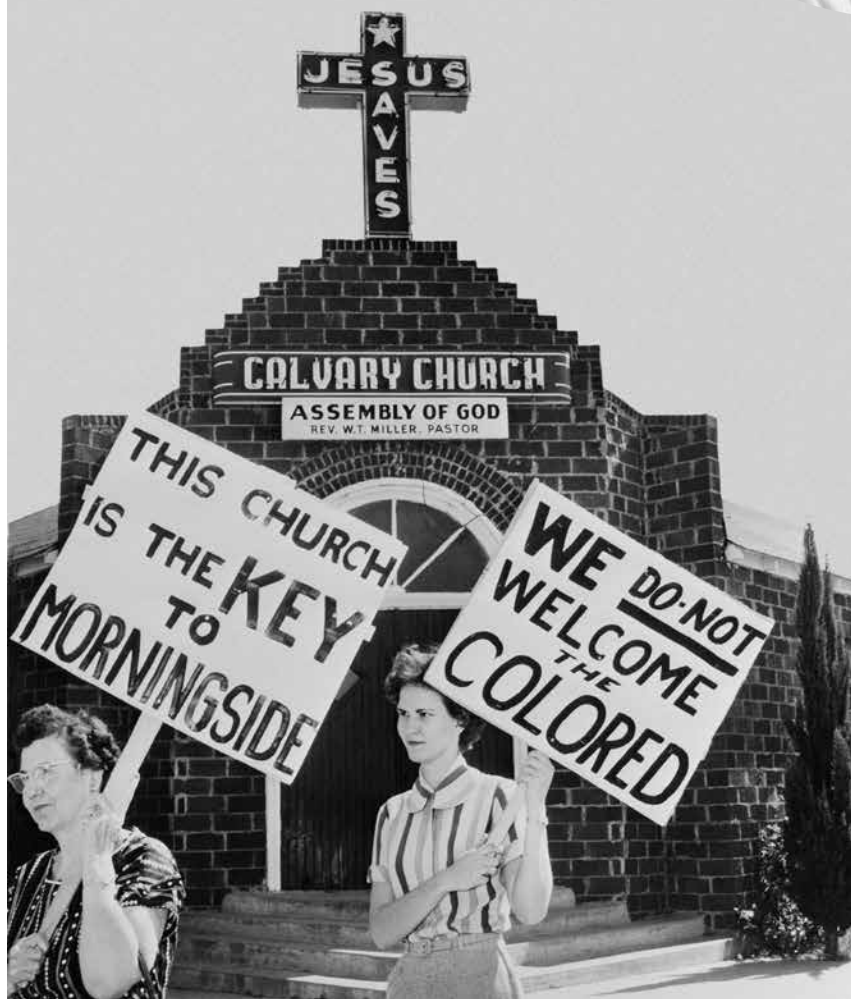
In 1905, the City of Ensley, Alabama, required all barbers to use separate razors, brushes, linens, and chairs for Black and white patrons,¹³ while the City of Birmingham outlawed interracial games of pool, cards, dice, dominoes, checkers, and billiards.¹⁴ Arkansas and Florida segregated Black and white prisoners, and in 1939, Louisiana required circuses to maintain separate, racially segregated tent entrances and ticket booths.¹⁵ Hospitals, public transportation, and public schools were segregated throughout the South.

The narrative of racial difference created to justify slavery — the myth that white people are superior to Black people — was not abolished by the Emancipation Proclamation or the Thirteenth Amendment, and it outlived slavery and Reconstruction. White Americans committed to the myth of Black inferiority used the law and violent terrorism to establish an apartheid society that relegated Black Americans to second-class citizenship and economic exploitation.



Top Right: Bogalusa, Louisiana, July 1, 1965. (© 1976, Matt Herron/The Image Works)

Bottom Left: White women protest desegregation in front of a church in Fort Worth, Texas, on October 9, 1956. (AP)





Young children wave Confederate flags at a White Citizens' Council meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, on November 16, 1960. The meeting was called to organize opposition to the integration of two local elementary schools. (Bettman / Getty Images)

DEFENDING A "WAY OF LIFE": THE 1940S

In 1940, 77 percent of Black Americans still lived in the South,¹⁶ where they made up 24 percent of the population but only 3.5 percent of registered voters.¹⁷ The white-controlled Democratic Party made white supremacy a central platform,¹⁸ excluded Black members as a matter of policy,¹⁹ and dominated state politics throughout the region.

Suppressing Black voters ensured the 1942 election of James O. Eastland as United States senator from Mississippi. Eastland would build a six-term career leading a national movement opposed to civil rights.

Black people were systematically excluded, disenfranchised, disempowered, and marginalized in most com-

munities. In the American South, racial humiliation was a daily experience. A political, social, economic, and cultural landscape that could only be enforced through violence and intimidation had been created to oppress and disfavor Black people.

In the 1940s, the frequency of lynchings declined but racial terrorism did not stop. Jesse Thornton was lynched in Luverne, Alabama, in 1940 for addressing a white policeman without the title “Mr.”; 15-year-old Willie Howard was lynched in 1944 in Suwannee County, Florida, for sending a love note to a white girl; and Reverend Isaac Simmons, a Black landowner, was lynched in 1944 in Amite County, Mississippi, by white men seeking to steal his land.²⁰

Members of lynch mobs were rarely prosecuted, and even in those rare cases, all-white juries refused to convict. In Pickens County, South Carolina, 26 of the 28 white men charged in the 1947 lynching of Willie Earle *admitted* their involvement, but white jurors acquitted them.²¹

Civil rights activists were targets of racial terror in this era. In 1940, as part of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Elbert Williams organized a voter registration drive in Brownsville, Tennessee, a group of white men that included the sheriff abducted him from his home. His beaten corpse was found in the Hatchie River days later. No one was prosecuted. The remaining Black activists were run out of town

and Brownsville’s NAACP chapter remained suppressed until 1961.²²

Racial violence was not restricted to the South. Millions of Black Americans fled to the North and West, where they were seen as threats to white jobs and culture.

In 1942, white people in Detroit attacked Black families and rioted against a planned public housing project for Black residents.²³ The next year, some 25,000 white factory workers at Detroit’s Packard Motor Company refused to work after three Black workers were promoted.²⁴

And in August 1944, white transit workers in Philadelphia staged a violent strike after eight Black men were hired as trolley drivers — a job previously reserved for whites only.²⁵

In Fontana, California, a Black man named O’Day Short, his wife Helen, and their two young children were killed in a December 1945 explosion at their new home after they refused to move out of the formerly all-white neighborhood. Though an NAACP investigation uncovered evidence of arson, police declared the fire an accident and closed the case.²⁶

Unchecked racialized violence and disenfranchisement of Black voters

kept America’s racial hierarchy intact. Public education was legally segregated throughout the South, and residential segregation in the North and West was widespread. Leisure and recreation spaces across the country were segregated by race, and many states banned interracial marriage.²⁷

In 1948, 24 people were arrested in Baltimore for attempting to play tennis in interracial groups.²⁸ In Ellisville, Mississippi, Davis Knight was sentenced to five years in prison for marrying a white woman.²⁹ Segregation and inequality remained deeply rooted in America, but international criticism forced some changes after World War II.

During World War II, American leaders resented the way that German and Japanese propagandists “made the most of the anti-Negro discrimination in this country.”³⁰ And after the war, “[t]he Cold War focus on the ideals of democracy and freedom assured that racial exceptions to the American practice of those principals would receive careful attention,” one historian observed. “Acts of racial violence in obscure rural parts of Dixie changed almost overnight from events of mostly local interest to headlines splashed across newspapers around the world.”³¹ Federal officials and Northern elites who had been indifferent to generations of racial violence and discrimination became more responsive when the issue threatened national political interests and not just Black

lives.

In 1942, in response to Black leaders' threat to stage a march on Washington, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which prohibited racial discrimination in the national defense industry.³² Six years later, President Harry Truman signed Executive Order 9981, which abolished racial discrimination in the military and ended segregation in the armed forces.³³

In 1944, a NAACP lawsuit challenging the Democratic Party's all-white primaries led to a decision striking down the practice in Texas³⁴ that ultimately ended segregated primaries

in all Southern states.³⁵ In 1946, the Supreme Court declared state segregation laws unconstitutional as applied to interstate bus travel.

At the same time, grassroots activism against segregation was on the rise.

Many Black soldiers returned to the South determined to achieve a "double victory" by fighting oppression on American soil just as they had fought

oppression abroad.³⁶

Between 1940 and 1946, NAACP membership grew from less than 50,000 to nearly a half million, and a third of these were based in the South.³⁷ A Black veteran named Medgar Evers helped the organization sprout branches throughout Mississippi in the 1940s and to charter a statewide conference in 1945.³⁸ In 1942, 2000 people attended a mass meeting in Harlem, New York, at which speakers called on President Roosevelt to condemn lynching.³⁹

Segregationists recognized these developments as a growing threat. In what historian Jason Morgan Ward calls "a white supremacist vision of Double Victory," white Americans "deemed civil rights agitation and federal encroachment to be as dangerous as an Axis invasion" and considered themselves defenders of true American values.⁴⁰

Southern senators successfully undercut President Roosevelt's executive order by refusing to support nondiscrimination rules in military contracts and eliminating funding to enforce them.⁴¹

South Carolina politicians attempted to sidestep the Supreme Court's ban on all-white primaries by requiring all primary voters to swear to support "the social, religious, and educational separation of races."⁴² When that rule was struck down, white residents resorted to violent intimidation. After Reverend Archie Ware, a Black man, voted in the 1948 primary in



First African American troops ever sent to England, marching back to camp during World War II, 1942. (David E. Scherman/The Life Picture Collection/Getty Images)

Abbeville County, South Carolina, a group of white men beat and stabbed him while two white police officers watched.⁴³

In Florida, Hillsborough County Supervisor of Registration John Deckle openly defied the Court and declared, “Negroes will not be allowed to vote as Democrats.”⁴⁴

In 1947, the Mississippi Democratic Party issued five rules “to bring about complete white supremacy at the polls” by requiring that potential party primary voters (1) oppose the creation of a committee on fair employment practices; (2) oppose anti-poll tax legislation; (3) oppose passage of a federal anti-lynch law; (4) support all party candidates in general elections; and (5) repudiate affiliation with any other party.⁴⁵

In 1948, Mississippi Governor Fielding L. Wright threatened to secede from the national Democratic Party if it pursued “anti-Southern” policies “seeking to tear down and disrupt the Southern way of life — which includes segregation of Negroes.”

Segregationists were not marginalized figures clinging to a dying system; rather, their views were embraced by mainstream America.

Public opinion polls in the 1940s reported that approximately two of every three white Americans

supported racially segregated schools,⁴⁶ and a majority supported racial discrimination in hiring.⁴⁷

A month before President Truman desegregated troops in July 1948, polls showed that 63 percent of Americans opposed integrating the military.⁴⁸

Truman’s support for federal legislation to end lynching, poll taxes, and segregation in interstate travel⁴⁹ was the last straw for many Southern politicians, who formed the States’ Rights Party in 1948.⁵⁰

The so-called Dixiecrats planned to leverage the Southern states’ electoral votes to defend racial segregation and maintain white supremacy.⁵¹ They nominated first-term South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond for president and Mississippi Governor Fielding Wright as his running mate. At the convention, Thurmond declared, “There is not enough troops in the army to force the southern people to break down segregation and admit the nigger race into our theaters, into our swimming pools, into our homes, and into our churches.”⁵²

The Dixiecrats carried Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, and South Carolina in 1948, and won 2.4 percent of the popular vote — more than 1.1 million votes nationwide.⁵³

Truman won in a landslide, and the States’ Rights Party faded, but the defectors stayed in power. James

Eastland, Mississippi’s senior senator by 1948, was a major coordinator of the Dixiecrat campaign but returned to the Senate as a Democrat and became chair of the civil rights subcommittee.⁵⁴

The Dixiecrat revolt began the South’s gradual shift from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party and cemented a white supremacist identity, a states’ rights narrative, and a model of uncompromising segregationist leadership.⁵⁵

After more than a decade in the Senate, former Mississippi Governor Theodore Bilbo in 1947 wrote *Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization* as an “S.O.S. call to every white man and white woman within the United States of America for immediate action.”⁵⁶ A fierce proponent of white supremacy throughout his political career, Bilbo ended his time in office with a message to the next generation. He urged white Americans to ensure complete and permanent racial separation by repatriating Black Americans to West Africa, warning that “[t]he campaign for complete equality launched by the Negro leaders has now reached alarming proportions.”⁵⁷

SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL: THE COURT'S ROLE

For more than a century before its groundbreaking decision to desegregate public schools in 1954, the Supreme Court protected slavery, undermined equal rights, immunized lynch mobs from punishment, and embraced Jim Crow. *Brown v. Board of Education* was a striking departure from the Court's longstanding role shielding the South from challenges to its racial caste system.

Preserving Slavery

The Supreme Court vigorously defended the property rights of slave owners and enshrined the narrative of racial difference in its precedent by holding that Black people “had no rights which the white man was bound to respect,” whether they were enslaved or not.⁵⁸

The Court struck down state laws to prevent slave traders from kidnapping free Black people and selling them into slavery⁵⁹ and defended slave owners' property rights by vacating the Missouri Compromise, which limited slavery in new United States territories.⁶⁰

Infamously, the Court's 1857 decision in *Dred Scott v. Sandford* established that no Black person, free or enslaved, could be a citizen of the

United States.⁶¹ The Court reasoned that Black people “had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations,” and therefore, it is “absolutely certain that the African race were not included under the name of citizens of a State” and not entitled to the “privileges and immunities” of citizenship.⁶²

Undermining Reconstruction

During Reconstruction — the period immediately following the Civil War when an effort was made to defend the rights of formerly enslaved Black people — Congress passed three constitutional amendments: the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery and involuntary servitude; the Fourteenth Amendment overturned *Dred Scott*, declared all people born in the United States to be citizens, and guaranteed citizens due process and equal protection of the laws; and the Fifteenth Amendment prohibited denying a man the right to vote “on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.” The Supreme Court swiftly and systematically gutted all three.

The Fourteenth Amendment was designed to prevent states from violating the rights of formerly enslaved people. In 1872, in the *Slaughterhouse Cases*, the Court nullified the amendment by holding that it could not limit the power of states to deny basic rights to their own citizens.⁶³



In 1875, in *United States v. Reese*, the Court held that the Fifteenth Amendment did not grant African Americans a federal right to vote,⁶⁴ struck down the statute Congress passed to protect African Americans' voting rights, and overturned the convictions of two election officials who had refused to count a Black man's vote.⁶⁵

Complicity in Racial Terrorism

As racial terror lynching raged throughout the South following the abolition of slavery, the Supreme Court repeatedly rendered the federal government powerless to protect African Americans from racial violence.



Engraved into the Supreme Court facade are the words “Equal Justice Under Law.” (EJI)

After killing as many as 150 Black people peacefully protesting at the courthouse in Colfax, Louisiana, in 1873, white defendants were convicted under a federal law designed to combat the Ku Klux Klan.⁶⁶ The Court overturned their convictions in *United States v. Cruikshank* and struck down the statute, holding that Congress was empowered to regulate only state action, not the acts of private citizens — even if they committed murder.⁶⁷

The conceit of this private/state actor distinction was laid bare in *Screws v. United States*, when the Court overturned the conviction of a sheriff who, along with two other law enforcement officers, beat

a handcuffed Black man to death.⁶⁸

The Court not only shut down federal attempts to protect Black citizens, but also permitted state courts to deny justice to Black victims. While the Court struck down a law that excluded Black men from jury service solely based on race in 1879, it permitted states to create property and educational requirements for jury service and gave local officials nearly unfettered discretion to use those requirements to exclude African Americans.⁶⁹

The Court made it so difficult to prove racial discrimination in jury selection that between 1904 and 1935, not a single conviction of a

Black defendant was reversed because of racial discrimination in jury selection, even though African Americans were universally excluded from Southern juries.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, all-white juries reliably acquitted white perpetrators of lynchings and other racial violence.

Authorizing Jim Crow

In 1898, in *Williams v. Mississippi*, the Supreme Court upheld Mississippi’s poll tax and other voting qualifications, even though the Court acknowledged they were adopted explicitly to disenfranchise African Americans, because the provisions on their face were “not limited by their language or effect

to one race.”⁷¹ And even though registrars used the qualifications to deny registration to all Black voters, the Court found “it has not been shown that their actual administration was evil; only that evil was possible under them.”⁷²

Alabama voting laws were more explicitly discriminatory, but in *Giles v. Harris*, the Court found no constitutional problem with Alabama’s scheme, even when shown that Black men who met all qualifications were still refused registration.⁷³ The Court concluded there was nothing it could do if Alabama

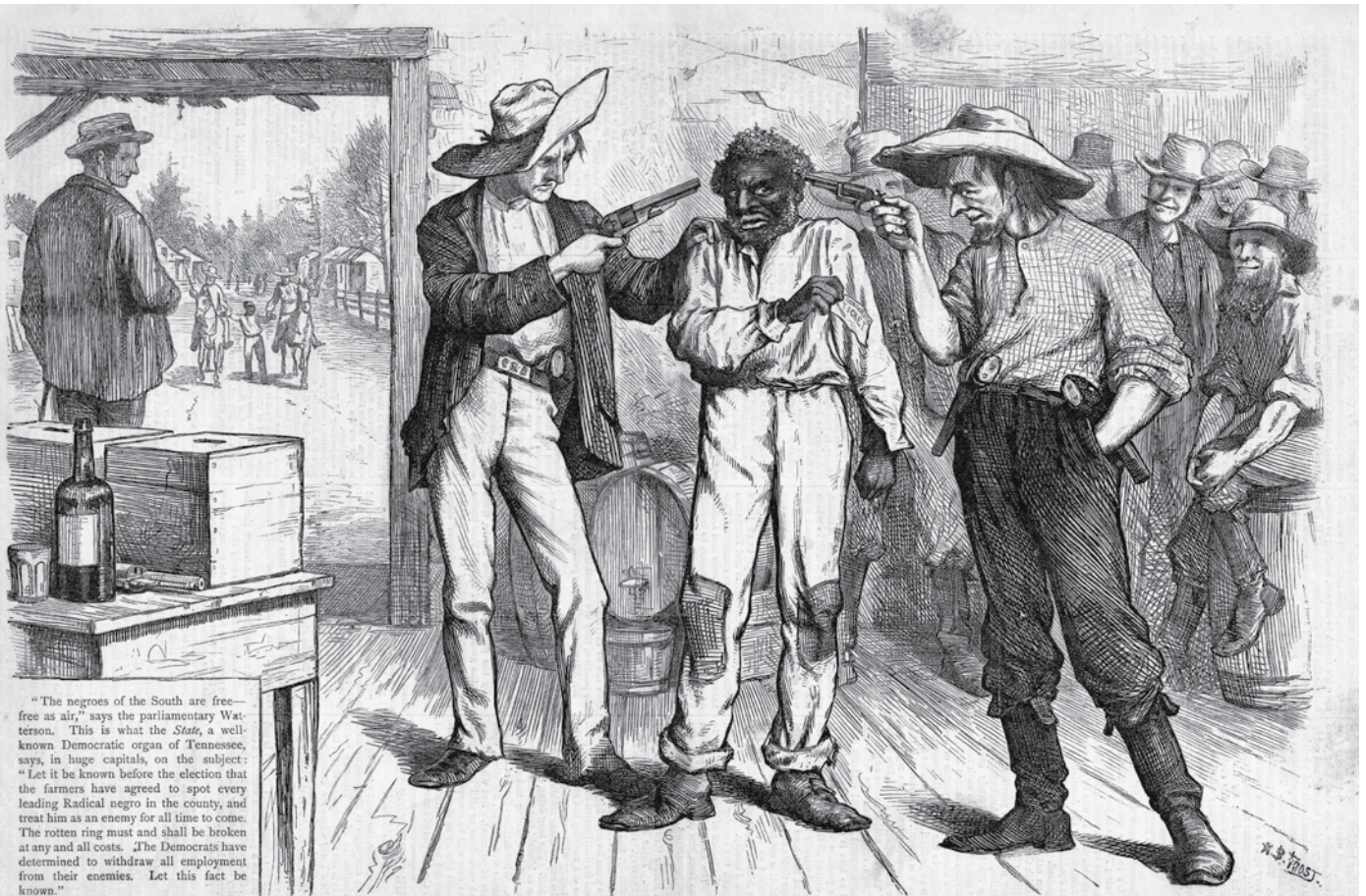
was truly determined to prevent African Americans from voting, and so it denied all relief.⁷⁴

While the Court struck down an undeniably unconstitutional grandfather clause in *Guinn v. United States* in 1915, it upheld the use of literacy tests⁷⁵ and poll taxes — tactics used to effectively deny voting rights to generations of African Americans for another 50 years.⁷⁶

The Court struck down anti-segregation laws and upheld state laws that required segregation. In 1877, the Court in *Hall v. DeCuir* struck

down a Louisiana law that prohibited segregation on all public conveyances within the state,⁷⁷ holding that it unconstitutionally regulated interstate commerce.⁷⁸ But a few years later the Court *allowed* a Mississippi segregation law to mandate racial separation on interstate railroad cars.⁷⁹

Plessy v. Ferguson, the Court’s most well-known decision upholding segregation, considered a Louisiana law requiring racial segregation of railroad passengers and found no constitutional violation where facilities were “separate but equal.” Writ-

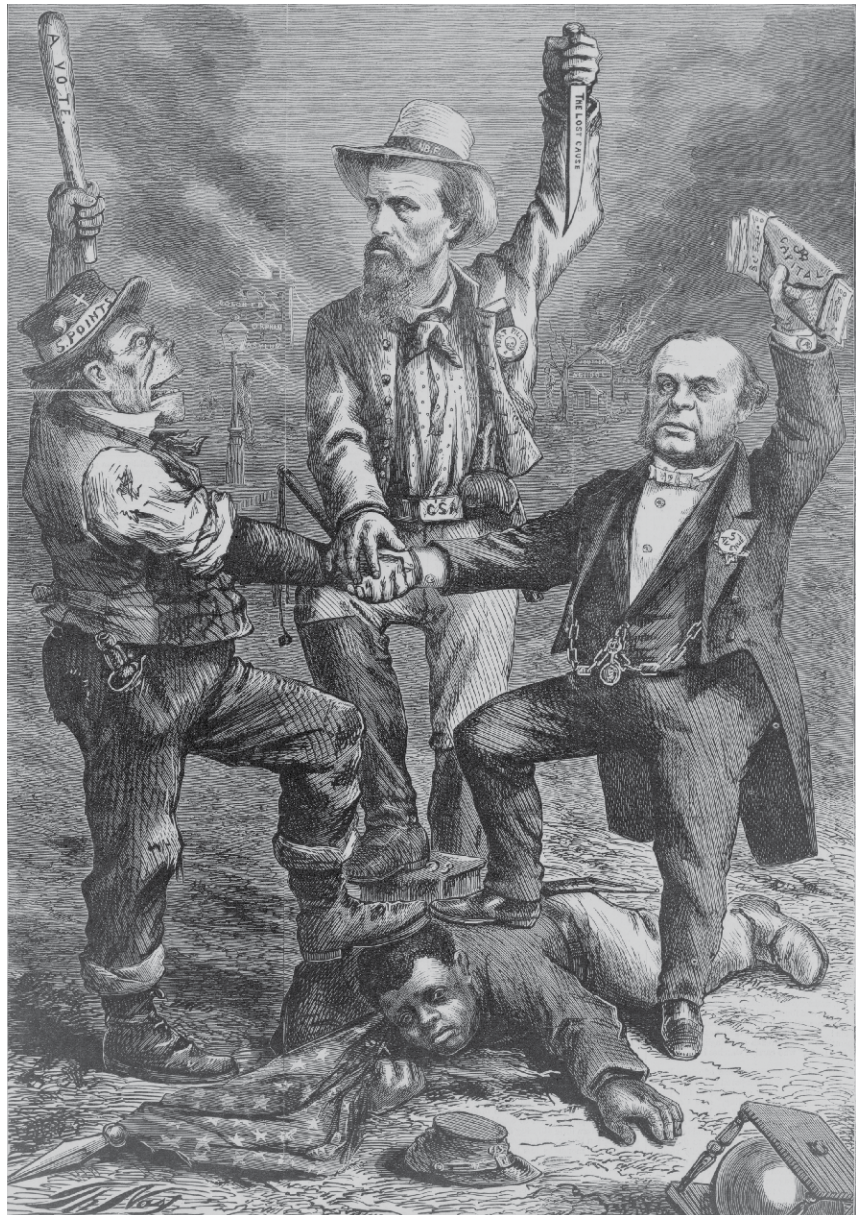


“The negroes of the South are free—free as air,” says the parliamentary Watertson. This is what the *State*, a well-known Democratic organ of Tennessee, says, in huge capitals, on the subject: “Let it be known before the election that the farmers have agreed to spot every leading Radical negro in the county, and treat him as an enemy for all time to come. The rotten ring must and shall be broken at any and all costs. The Democrats have determined to withdraw all employment from their enemies. Let this fact be known.”

ing in 1896, the Court found that Louisiana’s law could not “abolish distinctions based upon color, or [] enforce social, as distinguished from political, equality, or a commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either.”⁸⁰ The Court rejected Mr. Plessy’s argument that forced racial separation branded Black people as inferior, and countered, “If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it.”⁸¹

Even when enforcing its own “separate but equal” doctrine, the Court showed little commitment to the “equal” requirement. In *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education*, 55 years before *Brown*, the Court upheld the school board’s decision to close the Black high school but keep open the white high school because, it concluded, “it is impracticable to distribute taxes equally.”⁸² The Court absolved itself of responsibility for ensuring equality in education, writing that “the education of the people in schools maintained by state taxation is a matter belonging to the respective states.”⁸³

The Court’s embrace of Jim Crow extended even to voluntary associations between white and Black people. In *Berea College v. Kentucky*, in 1908, the Court upheld a Kentucky law that prohibited private colleges from teaching Black and white students together, reasoning that the college, although private, was nonetheless dependent on a state charter, and so was subject to virtually any conditions that Kentucky chose to impose.⁸⁴



Harper’s Weekly, September 5, 1868. (Thomas Nast/Harper’s Weekly)

In 1875, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act, which barred racial discrimination in public accommodations, facilities, conveyances, and places of amusement. In the *Civil Rights Cases*, the Court struck down the law, holding that Congress had no authority to prohibit discrimination by private parties.

The Court rejected the argument that the law was meant to eradicate the effects of slavery, writing that formerly enslaved people had already been given enough time and assistance and could not expect to forever be “the special favorite of the laws.”⁸⁵

"MASSIVE RESISTANCE"

“

If we can organize the Southern States for massive resistance to this order, I think that in time the rest of the country will realize that racial integration is not going to be accepted in the South.

HARRY BYRD, UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM VIRGINIA, FEBRUARY 1956⁸⁶



Crowd protests the admission of Black students to Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1959. (John T Bledsoe/PhotoQuest/Getty Images)

The Supreme Court was a reliable partner in maintaining slavery and in the campaign to rebuild and strengthen racial hierarchy and white supremacy after the Civil War. When the Court changed course in the mid-20th century and began striking down laws that authorized racial discrimination and segregation, many white people in the South felt betrayed.

On May 17, 1954, in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the Supreme Court unanimously invalidated racial segregation in public education, reasoning that segregated public schools were “inherently unequal” and violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.⁸⁷ By overturning the nearly 60-year-old precedent of “separate but equal,”⁸⁸ *Brown* threatened to dislodge a cornerstone of the Southern racial caste system.

Brown outraged white segregationists as much as it energized civil rights activists. Throughout the South, where state constitutions⁸⁹ and state law⁹⁰ mandated segregated schools, white people decried the decision as a tyrannical exercise of federal power. Within months, Brookhaven, Mississippi, circuit judge Thomas Pickens Brady published a pamphlet that predicted *Brown* would harm both races.⁹¹

What the Supreme Court needs to do is to spend about thirty days in Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi or East Texas and associate intimately with the average Negro family. It should do this in August, mind you, and then the Supreme Court would have a passing understanding of the Negro and his problems, and its decision would not embody within it such foolishness as “many Negroes have achieved outstanding success in the arts and sciences, as well as in the business and professional world.” . . .

In so far as the South is concerned, the Southern Negro knows we are his friend. We have provided his material necessities when he could not do so for himself. Gradually we have opened the door of opportunity to him and will continue to do so. The South has produced some Negroes of considerable wealth and ability. Doctors, lawyers, educators, ministers, businessmen and farmers can be found among them, but “one swallow does not make a summer.”⁹²

White Americans implemented a strategy of “massive resistance” to desegregation by deploying a range of tactics and weapons against the growing movement for civil rights. Some of these tools, such as bombing and murdering civil rights activists, continued the tradition of maintaining white supremacy through lethal violence. Other methods, such as criminalizing, arresting, and imprisoning peaceful protestors, foreshadowed the modern mass incarceration era.

Opposition to civil rights and racial equality was a mass movement. Most white Americans, especially in the South, supported segregation.

Millions of white parents nationwide acted to deny Black children equal education by voting to close and defund public schools, transferring their children to private, white-only schools, and harassing and violently attacking Black students while their own children watched or participated.

Only a small minority of white Americans actively dissented from the widespread opposition to civil rights by engaging in civil rights activism and supporting Black activists.

More than ever before, white people used their opposition to civil rights to prove their Southern loyalty and measure that of their neighbors. “Not unlike pro-slavery zealots of the 1850s,” historian Neil McMillen observed, “the pro-segregationists of a century later were inclined to brook no latter-day abolitionism among fellow southerners . . . In this repressive atmosphere the moderate was vilified and he who was found ‘soft’ on integration was adjudged treasonous.”⁹³ With battle lines drawn, whiteness now required action.



Top: Fort Lauderdale, Florida, 1964. (Steve Schapiro)

Bottom: A young man protests school desegregation in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1963. (© Flip Schulke)



Black workers leave Florida for New Jersey in July 1940. (© CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)

SHARECROPPER EVICTIONS

White landowners in the South evicted thousands of African American sharecroppers who engaged in activism during the Civil Rights Movement. Most sharecroppers lived and farmed on white-owned land. Dependent on high-interest loans to buy seed and equipment at the season's start, they lived in a cycle of debt that eliminated their profit and prevented them from saving to buy land of their own.⁹⁴

Sharecropping dates back to the late 1860s, when newly-emancipated Black people were coerced through violence, deception, and desperation to

farm under terms that resembled enslavement.

Generations later, sharecropping largely defined agricultural labor in the Deep South, where many Black people remained trapped in poverty.⁹⁵ An evicted sharecropper typically had nowhere to go, and white landowners knew their Black tenants were especially vulnerable to economic retaliation for supporting civil rights.⁹⁶

"I been living on this farm [in Lowndes County, Alabama] since January 2, 1931," Mrs. Armanda Glover said in 1966. "And then two days before Christmas the landlord . . . said we [my husband and five children] had to move."⁹⁷ That same year, in nearby Dallas County, 57-year-old Arthur Brown received notice that he and his nine children were being evicted

from the Minter plantation, where he had lived since he was two years old.⁹⁸

In 1960, 1400 African Americans registered to vote in Fayette County, Tennessee, and about 700 were evicted.⁹⁹ Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, scores of families were evicted from plantations throughout Mississippi.¹⁰⁰ White landowners in Greene County, Alabama, evicted at least 75 Black families in 1960,¹⁰¹ and more than 40 Black families were evicted in Lowndes County, Alabama, in December 1965 alone.¹⁰²

Evictions were part of a systematic plan to thwart civil rights activism and prevent Black people from voting. Black men and women who registered to vote were required to provide the names of their employers, who could then be notified.¹⁰³ Newspapers printed the names of Black people who attempted to register,¹⁰⁴ and White Citizens' Councils distributed voter lists to white merchants, who denied basic necessities and employment to African Americans who registered — or tried to register — to vote.¹⁰⁵

On August 31, 1962, Fannie Lou Hamer and other Black residents of the Mississippi Delta traveled to Indianola to register to vote. Soon after, she and her husband were evicted from the Marlowe plantation where they had been sharecroppers for 18 years. Homeless and denied work, the Hamers moved into temporary housing in nearby Ruleville, where white shooters targeted their home less than two weeks later. Undeterred, Mrs. Hamer returned to register to vote that December, and told the circuit clerk: "You can't have me fired anymore 'cause I'm already fired, [and] I won't have to move now, because I'm not living in a white man's house."¹⁰⁶ In 1963, Mrs. Hamer was brutally beaten by police for her continued activism, but went on to lead a movement demanding po-

litical representation for Black people in the South.¹⁰⁷

Many evicted families were forced to live in tent cities that sprang up throughout the South.¹⁰⁸ In communities that most closely resembled refugee camps, entire families sheltered in fabric tents that froze in the winter,¹⁰⁹ with no running water¹¹⁰ and one outhouse for dozens of people.¹¹¹

Mary Williams, a Black woman evicted from her home in Tennessee, remembered that "the ground was frozen real hard, and you could not get rest. We got cardboard boxes, split those boxes open, spread them on the grass . . . But after we closed up for the night . . . the ground began to thaw and that made water come through the cardboard."¹¹²

White segregationist "night riders" terrorized the camps, firing guns into the tent cities in the middle of the night. "Tent City was like a shooting gallery," recalled SNCC field secretary C.J. Jones. "They used to come by there three or four times a week and shoot into Tent City, and you have to remember there were women and children [there]."¹¹³ Law enforcement did nothing to protect Black people from this terrorism.¹¹⁴

During this era, many African Americans were made to choose between exercising their rights and protecting their families from homelessness and violence. The threat of eviction and other forms of economic retaliation forced countless Black men and women to stay on the sidelines in the struggle for equality. "It's a very frightening thing to have to accept the cold reality," observed SNCC field secretary George Green, "that in order to exercise their rights, to get what they could get in this great Democracy in America, here in 1966, people were living in tents."¹¹⁵

White Citizens' Councils spread rapidly throughout the South. Within two years, more than 250,000 determined members¹¹⁶ were working together to delay school desegregation through political action, economic intimidation, and even violence.

In South Carolina, the councils had 55 chapters totaling 40,000 members by July 1956.¹¹⁷ Within two weeks after 17 Black parents signed a pro-integration petition in the community of Elloree, South Carolina, all had lost their jobs or been evicted from their farms; 14 of the parents asked to withdraw their names.¹¹⁸

Mississippi had 60,000 members by October 1955. When 53 Black residents of Yazoo County signed a desegregation petition launched by the NAACP, the council published a newspaper ad naming them and they faced widespread harassment, lost work, and even had their bank accounts cancelled. Ultimately, all signers removed their names and the Yazoo County NAACP was disbanded.¹¹⁹

SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 1963 THE SELMA TIMES-JOURNAL THREE

ASK YOURSELF THIS IMPORTANT QUESTION: What have I personally done to Maintain Segregation?

If the answer disturbs you, probe deeper and decide what you are willing to do to preserve racial harmony in Selma and Dallas County. Is it worth four dollars to prevent a "Birmingham" here? That's what it costs to be a member of your Citizens Council, whose efforts are not thwarted by courts which give sit-in demonstrators legal immunity, prevent school boards from expelling students who participate in mob activities and would place federal referees at the board of voter registrars.

Law enforcement can be called only after these things occur, but your Citizens Council prevents them from happening.

Why else did only 350 Negroes attend a so-called mass voter registration meeting that outside agitators worked 60 days to organize in Selma?

Gov. Wallace told a state meeting of the council three weeks ago: "You are doing a wonderful job, but you should speak with the united voice of 100,000 persons. Go back home and get more members."

Gov. Wallace stands in the University doorway next Tuesday facing possible ten years imprisonment for violating a federal injunction.

Is it worth four dollars to you to prevent sit-ins, mob marches and wholesale Negro voter registration efforts in Selma?

If so, prove your dedication by joining and supporting the work of the Dallas County Citizens Council today. Six dollars will make both you and your wife members of an organization which has already given Selma nine years of Racial Harmony since "Black Monday."

**Send Your Check To
THE DALLAS COUNTY
Citizens Council**

SELMA, ALABAMA
YOUR MEMBERSHIP IS GOOD FOR 12 MONTHS

A White Citizens' Council's recruiting pamphlet published in the Selma Times Journal on June 9, 1963. (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society)

TARGETING THE NAACP

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, formed in 1909 as a bi-racial organization to advance justice for African Americans, faced retaliation from segregationists long before the civil rights era. But its role in *Brown* made the NAACP a target of white politicians, lawmakers, and angry community members¹²⁰ who blamed it for the crisis of desegregation and declared war on its members.¹²¹

White Citizens' Councils throughout the South capitalized on whites' dominance over financial capital, land ownership, and industry to punish civil rights participation. After the local council circulated the roster of NAACP members in Clarendon County, South Carolina, those listed promptly lost their jobs, credit, and suppliers.

Z. Alexander Looby and Arthur Shores, Black-NAACP lawyers who actively filed desegregation lawsuits after *Brown*, both survived bombings of their homes in the early 1960s.¹²² But other bombings claimed the lives of NAACP activists, including Harry and Harriette Moore, teachers and founders of the NAACP chapter in Brevard County, Florida. Their deaths in an explosion at their home on Christmas Day in 1951 led to protests across the nation but no immediate arrests.¹²³

In Mississippi alone, the list of murdered NAACP activists included Reverend George Lee (1955), Medgar Evers (1963), Louis Allen (1964), and Vernon Dahmer (1966). "A jury would not dare convict a white man for killing a nigger in Mississippi," boasted Klansman Sam Bowers after he was indicted for Mr. Dahmer's murder. He was not convicted.¹²⁴

Opponents also used legislation to undermine NAACP activities. Between 1956 and 1960, states passed some 230 laws targeting desegregation activists, and most specifically targeted the NAACP.¹²⁵ Some laws explicitly barred NAACP members from public employment, especially as school teachers;¹²⁶ the NAACP and its members were harassed with criminal prosecutions and bar association disciplinary proceedings; and some states outlawed the organization entirely.¹²⁷

In 1956, Alabama Attorney General John Patterson filed suit to enjoin the NAACP's activities in the state and demanded access to its membership lists and other records. "The NAACP is no credit to the Negro race and has set the Negro's cause back 100 years in Alabama," remarked Patterson, who was later elected governor.¹²⁸ The state court granted an injunction restraining the NAACP from operating in Alabama that lasted for several years until it was overturned by the Supreme Court.¹²⁹ Other states employed the same strategy.

Courts eventually invalidated most anti-NAACP statutes, but the lengthy litigation diverted already strained resources from civil rights efforts.¹³⁰ Harassment and violence also contributed to drops in participation: Southern membership fell from 128,000 in 1955 to 80,000 in 1957 and nearly 250 branches dissolved; NAACP activities briefly shut down statewide in Louisiana and Texas; and Alabama's NAACP ceased operations from 1956 to 1964.¹³¹

"At stake in the long run," read an official NAACP press statement in 1958, "is the continued existence of NAACP in Alabama and in other Southern states which have taken similar action to ban NAACP in the belief that the civil rights movement and desegregation of public schools can be halted if NAACP is suppressed."¹³²



A threatening poster circulated by the KKK in Birmingham, Alabama (1933). (Alabama Department of Archives and History.)

DELAY, DELAY, DELAY: THE LONG ROAD TO SCHOOL INTEGRATION

The language of the Court's unanimous decision in *Brown* was groundbreaking, but building a nine-justice majority had cost the ruling its teeth. Just a year later, the Court in *Brown II* walked back its commitment to equal rights and rejected calls for immediate, federally-enforced desegregation.

Before *Brown II* was decided, South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi adopted constitutional amendments authorizing their legislatures to end public education if the Court ordered immediate desegregation.¹³³ Other strategists developed policies disguised as desegregation plans that instead stopped desegregation in its tracks.

In March 1955, North Carolina became the first state to pass a pupil placement law.¹³⁴ Marian Wright Edelman, then a young Black civil rights lawyer named Marian A. Wright, called the policy “legalistic horseplay to keep Negro children out of white schools.”¹³⁵ By authorizing local school districts to assign students to schools based on a long list of subjective, “race-neutral” criteria, the law maintained nearly all-white schools without explicit legal segregation.¹³⁶ In the words of historian Earl Black, the “North Carolina Way” ended “school desegregation at a seemingly pace, one approximating the crawl of an arthritic turtle.”¹³⁷

In May 1955, the Court issued *Brown II*, in which it ordered schools to integrate “with all deliberate speed.”¹³⁸ The decision approved gradualism, imposed no deadlines for beginning or completing integration, issued vague guidelines, and granted Southern district judges broad discretionary oversight. Hailed as a “very definite victory for the South,”¹³⁹ the ruling pleased many pro-segregation legal and political strategists and emboldened states to undermine courts’ desegregation orders.

Louisiana voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment that allowed the state to use its police powers to keep schools segregated.¹⁴⁰ In Virginia, Prince Edward County officials stopped funding public education,¹⁴¹ and North Carolina devised a plan that permitted local communities to close public schools by popular vote if they were threatened with imminent desegregation.¹⁴²

North Carolina’s pupil placement law survived legal challenge in 1957, and by 1958, every other Southern state had passed their own.¹⁴³ Alabama legislators explicitly declared that the state’s placement plan was intended to block integration, but in 1958, a unanimous Supreme Court nonetheless upheld the law.¹⁴⁴ Alabama officials were “jubilant,” and Senator Russell Long of Louisiana said the decision was “the most encouraging thing for the South in some time,” as it “shows a willingness of the court to settle for token integration.”¹⁴⁵

Indeed, though *Brown* ruled that segregated schools harmed Black students and violated their rights as Americans, *Brown II* prioritized the rights and prefer-



Top: Segregationist protestors surround Elizabeth Eckford, one of nine Black students to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1957. Reflecting on the experience decades later, Ms. Eckford observed, "True reconciliation can occur only when we honestly acknowledge our painful, but shared, past." (Will Counts Collection: Indiana University Archives)

Bottom: Grace McKinley walks her daughter and a friend through an angry crowd on the way to Fehr Elementary School in Nashville, Tennessee, on September 9, 1957. One member of the crowd holds a sign that reads, "God is the author of segregation." (Nashville Public Library, Special Collections)

ences of white parents by enabling delay. State legislatures passed bills to thwart desegregation through “freedom-of-choice plans, which allowed parents to choose among several schools; transfer options, which permitted parents to move their children out of integrated schools; and grade-a-year plans, which started desegregation in the first or twelfth grade and then expanded it to one additional grade every year.”¹⁴⁶

Pro-segregation lawmakers vocally opposed *Brown*. In March 1956, most of the South’s representatives in Congress — 19 senators and 77 representatives — signed Virginia senator Harry Byrd’s *Southern Manifesto on Integration*, which condemned *Brown* as a “clear abuse of judicial power” orchestrated by “outside agitators” and pledged the South to all “lawful means” of resistance.¹⁴⁷

Strom Thurmond, former South Carolina Governor and Dixiecrat presidential candidate, was elected to the Senate in 1954 and helped draft the document. The legislatures of eight Southern states — Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, and Virginia — also enacted “interposition” resolutions that denounced *Brown* as an “illegal encroachment” on state’s rights and declared it “null, void and of no effect.”¹⁴⁸

Virtually no desegregation occurred in any states of the former Confederacy until 1957, leading one Black congressman to concede that the South had won “the first round in the battle for compliance” with *Brown*.¹⁴⁹ One exception was Clinton, Tennessee, where the integration of a small-town high school in 1956 led to prolonged violence by enraged white mobs organized by White Citizens’ Councils.

A group of teenage girls scream obscenities at Black students entering their high school in Montgomery, Alabama. (© Flip Schulke/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)





VIOLENT RESISTANCE IN CLINTON, TENNESSEE

After *Brown*, a federal judge ordered the local high school in Clinton, Tennessee, to integrate by the start of the 1956-57 school year, and a small group of Black students dubbed the “Clinton Twelve” registered to attend class with 800 white students.¹⁵⁰ John Kasper of the Seaboard White Citizens’ Council quickly arrived in Clinton, where he urged white students to boycott classes and community members to protest integration.¹⁵¹ A few days after students began classes, the crowd of pro-segregation protestors had grown to between 500 and 1000 people and the local sheriff sent the Black students home “for their own safety.”¹⁵²

That evening, Kasper led 800 people in an anti-integration rally on the lawn of the Anderson County courthouse. The next day, more than 200 white students boycotted class and the mob outside the school grew increasingly violent, assaulting a Black woman as she passed on the street and breaking a window at the local police station.¹⁵³ “We need all the rabble rousers we can get,” Kasper told a crowd of white supporters in Birmingham a few weeks later. “We want trouble and we want it everywhere we can get it — a collapse of law and order is near at hand.”¹⁵⁴

Kasper was jailed for contempt of court, and Asa Carter of the North Alabama White Citizens’ Council took over leadership of the Clinton opposition. Clinton had just 4000 residents, but Carter rallied a mob of more than 1000 people for several nights, giving speeches at-

tacking the Supreme Court and the NAACP as agents of “mongrelization” through “race mixing.” His enraged audience assaulted Black motorists and pedestrians,¹⁵⁵ burned a cross on the Clinton High School lawn, and faced off with local police until, at the mayor’s request, the governor sent in the state highway patrol and national guard.¹⁵⁶

White violence escalated even after troops arrived. Segregationists shot into a home occupied by the father of one of the Clinton Twelve, threw dynamite into the Black community of a nearby town, and attempted to lynch two Black men held in the local jail.¹⁵⁷ Seventy miles away, a mob of five white men confronted two white national guardsmen near the town of Dayton and asked if they would go to Clinton to enforce integration if ordered; when one of the guardsman answered that he would, one of the men attacked him with a knife.¹⁵⁸

School resumed in Clinton after Labor Day. Troops departed and white student attendance gradually increased, but tensions remained.¹⁵⁹ On September 26, 1956, dynamite exploded in a field next to the home of one of the Clinton Twelve.¹⁶⁰ On December 4, a white minister who escorted the Black students to classes was beaten by enraged whites as he returned home.¹⁶¹ On February 14, the Black section of Clinton suffered at least eight dynamite explosions and, a week later, only seven of the original Clinton Twelve remained at Clinton High School, where they experienced attacks and harassment throughout the year.¹⁶² On October 5, 1958, two years after Black students first integrated Clinton High School, the school was heavily damaged in a pre-dawn bombing.¹⁶³

In the fall of 1957, 11 Black students entered schools in three North Carolina cities and 11 entered white schools in Nashville, where an elementary school was destroyed by a dynamite explosion one day after it held integrated classes.

Nine Black students attempting to enroll at all-white Little Rock Central High School that September were confronted by angry white crowds of students and adults and blocked by Arkansas National Guard troops commanded by Governor Orval Faubus. When President Dwight Eisenhower sent federal troops to escort the Little Rock Nine into school, hundreds of white people attacked Black residents and reporters, causing nationally publicized "chaos, bedlam, and turmoil" that led a federal court to halt desegregation. The Supreme Court overturned that decision and ordered immediate integration, but in a move voters later approved in a referendum, Faubus closed all public high schools in Little Rock for the 1958–1959 school year.¹⁶⁴

No Southern state made any further progress toward desegregation until 1959, when Virginia admitted 21 Black students to seven previously white schools in two cities, and two formerly all-white schools in Miami, Florida, gained Black students.¹⁶⁵

By 1960, only 98 of Arkansas's 104,000 Black students attended desegregated schools; as did 34 of 302,000 in North Carolina; 169 of 146,000 in Tennessee; and 103 of 203,000 in Virginia. In the five Deep South states, every single one of 1.4 million Black schoolchildren attended segregated schools until the fall of 1960.¹⁶⁶

By the start of the 1964–65 school year, less than 3 percent of the South's African American children attended school with white students, and in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Mississippi, and South Carolina that number remained substantially below 1 percent.¹⁶⁷



Top: Donna Jean Barksdale, age 11, sits alone on her first day of school in Hoxie, Arkansas. She was one of 21 children to integrate the school in 1955. (Mississippi Valley Collection, University of Memphis)

Bottom: In response to the admission of the Little Rock Nine, Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus reads a statement during a segregation rally on the steps of the State Capital in Little Rock, Arkansas. (John T Bledsoe/PhotoQuest/Getty Images)



SCHOOL CLOSURES

After *Brown II*, many states authorized the closing of public schools to avoid integration. In 1956, the Virginia General Assembly passed a law that required the closure of any public school where white and Black children were enrolled together and cut off state funds to integrated schools.¹⁶⁸ The governor promptly closed nine schools in Warren County, Charlottesville, and Norfolk to prevent integration.¹⁶⁹

States also redirected public funds to maintain segregated education. After Virginia's highest court invalidated the 1956 laws closing and defunding integrated public schools, lawmakers enacted a new "freedom of choice" program that created tuition grants for white students to attend new private schools.¹⁷⁰

Officials in Prince Edward County, Virginia, closed their entire public school system in May 1959 after a federal court ordered integration and instead created private schools for white students using state grants and county tax credits to cover tuition expenses.¹⁷¹ More than 90 percent of the county's white students enrolled in the new all-white private school, while the more than 1700 Black students in the county had no state-funded educational option for five years,¹⁷² until the Supreme Court overturned Virginia's tuition grants and forced Prince Edward County schools to reopen.¹⁷³

Federal courts struck down state efforts to selectively close public schools to avoid integration,¹⁷⁴ but those rulings failed to stop white residents from fleeing public schools. In 1963, after a federal court ordered immediate integration in Macon County, Alabama, Governor George Wallace temporarily closed Tuskegee High School to prevent 13 Black students from enrolling. When the school reopened, all 275 white students withdrew, and most used state-funded scholarships to enroll at Macon Academy — a newly formed, all-white private school.¹⁷⁵

Teenage boys wave Confederate flags during a protest against school integration in Montgomery, Alabama, 1963. (© Flip Schulke/CORBIS/Getty Images)



SEGREGATION BY FORCE

In the wake of *Brown*, up to a quarter of white Southerners admitted to pollsters that they “favored violence, if necessary, to prevent school desegregation.”¹⁷⁶ In 1956, Ku Klux Klan rallies drew hundreds, even thousands, in South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Florida — states where the group had been considered extinct. In 1957, six Birmingham, Alabama, Klansmen castrated a Black man after taunting him for “think[ing] nigger kids should go to school with [white] kids.”¹⁷⁷

“

When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to abolish the Negro race, proper methods should be used. Among them are guns, bow and arrows, slingshots and knives.

White Citizens’ Councils claimed to repudiate violence, but their rhetoric suggested otherwise. A handbill circulated at a large council rally in Montgomery, Alabama, denounced desegregation and declared, “When in the course of human events it becomes necessary to abolish the Negro race, proper methods should be used. Among them are guns, bow and arrows, slingshots and knives.”¹⁷⁸

Virtually every year after *Brown*, school desegregation generated violent opposition somewhere: Milford, Delaware, in 1954;¹⁷⁹ Hoxie, Arkansas, in 1955;¹⁸⁰ Tuscaloosa, Alabama,¹⁸¹ Clinton, Tennessee,¹⁸² Mansfield, Texas,¹⁸³ and Clay and Sturgis communities in Kentucky in 1956;¹⁸⁴ Little Rock and Nashville in 1957;¹⁸⁵ Clinton

(again) in 1958;¹⁸⁶ New Orleans in 1960;¹⁸⁷ Athens, Georgia, in 1961;¹⁸⁸ Oxford, Mississippi, in 1962;¹⁸⁹ and Birmingham in 1963.¹⁹⁰

In Mansfield, Texas, the local citizens’ council organized white residents armed with guns and other weapons to block Black children from entering school. The mobs also hanged an effigy of a Black man with signs attached to each pant leg that read, “This Negro tried to enter a white school. This would be a terrible way to die” and “Stay Away, Niggers.” Texas Governor Allan Shivers commended the “orderly protests against a situation instigated and agitated by the [NAACP],” and sent Texas Rangers to remove any students “white or colored, whose attendance or attempts to attend Mansfield High School would be reasonably calculated to incite violence.”¹⁹¹ Local residents and state officials prevented Mansfield’s public schools from officially desegregating until 1965.¹⁹²

Mob violence waged by white segregationists throughout the South drew national attention and brought school desegregation to a halt across the region.

New Orleans

In November 1960, after the state legislature’s attempt to block a federal court’s order to desegregate New Orleans schools failed, mobs organized outside two elementary schools where four Black students enrolled.¹⁹³ Escorted by federal marshals, six-year-old Ruby Bridges started first grade at all-white William Frantz Elementary School and was greeted by “hundreds of vicious protestors, their faces contorted by hate, spitting, snarling, and yelling obscenities—such as ‘kill them niggers’—at first-graders walking to school in their Sunday best.”¹⁹⁴

A group of white mothers gathered daily to scream invectives at children, using profanity that writer John Steinbeck described as “bestial and filthy and degenerate.”¹⁹⁵ When Ruby arrived in her assigned classroom, she and the teacher were the only two people present; nearly all the white children were withdrawn from school and Ruby remained the only student in her class for the entire school year. Despite Ruby’s young age, a



woman threatened to poison her on the second day of school, and another woman confronted her with a Black doll in a wooden coffin.¹⁹⁶

Ruby's family members also faced threats and retaliation: the local grocery store banned the family from entering, Ruby's father was fired from his job,¹⁹⁷ and her grandparents were evicted from the Mississippi farm where they worked as sharecroppers.¹⁹⁸

Ole Miss

In 1962, after a federal court ordered the University of Mississippi to enroll 29-year-old Black veteran and Mississippi native James Meredith, Governor and White Citizens' Council member Ross Barnett personally blocked Mr. Meredith from entering the Ole Miss campus.¹⁹⁹ On September 30, 1962, pro-segregation mobs gathered on campus and waged violent riots that left two people dead and many injured. When a federal marshal escorted Mr. Meredith on campus to enroll, Mississippi Attorney General Joe Patterson told students they could refuse "to socialize or fraternize with an undesirable student." Mr. Meredith suffered ongoing isolation, harassment, and violence.²⁰⁰ As he ate in the cafeteria one night in October, a rock was thrown through a window near his table, and on another occasion, a dead raccoon was left on his car.²⁰¹

James Meredith persisted and graduated on August 18, 1963, but that did not end his activism or the violence against him. In 1966, while staging a one-man protest march across Mississippi, Mr. Meredith was shot and wounded.²⁰²

University of Alabama

In 1956, after a federal court ordered the segregated University of Alabama to admit a Black woman named Autherine Lucy, a white mob gathered on campus, burned a cross, and marched through town singing *Dixie*. Chanting "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Autherine has got to go," the mobs terrorized any African Americans it encountered, broke car windows, and smashed roofs.²⁰³



Left: On August 30, 1956, a white mob hung an African American effigy at the top of Mansfield High School's flag pole in Texas. The effigy was hung and burned in response to 12 Black students desegregating the school. (Bettman/Corbis)

Top Right: White mothers and children scream at Black children on their way to school in Sturgis, Kentucky, September 1956. (Photo by Myron Davis/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images)



Students at the University of Alabama burn desegregation literature in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, on February 6, 1956, in response to the enrollment of Autherine Lucy. (Library of Congress/AP)

The mob of students and older community members grew to 1200 people and confronted Ms. Lucy on her third day of class, shouting "Lynch the nigger!" and "Keep Bama white!"²⁰⁴ She was pelted with rotten eggs, gravel, and mud balls containing rocks and had to hide in the back of a police car to escape.²⁰⁵ In response, the university suspended Ms. Lucy citing safety concerns, and then expelled her when she tried to challenge the suspension in court. This major segregationist victory spurred a surge of support for the citizens' councils.²⁰⁶

Seven years later, in 1963, the University of Alabama was ordered to admit three Black students.²⁰⁷ George Wallace had just taken office as governor after promising to resist integration: "I shall refuse to abide by any such illegal federal court order even to the point of standing in the schoolhouse door, if necessary."²⁰⁸ He famously reaffirmed this promise in his inaugural address, declaring from "where once Jefferson Davis stood":

In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny . . . and I say . . . segregation now . . . segregation tomorrow . . . segregation forever.²⁰⁹

The federal court enjoined Governor Wallace from interfering in the Black students' enrollment, but when they arrived to register on June 11, 1963, he stood in the doorway of Foster Auditorium to block their entrance²¹⁰ and declared, "I stand here today, as Governor of this sovereign State, and refuse to willingly submit to illegal usurpation of power by the Central Government."²¹¹ Only after President John F. Kennedy federalized the national guard did Wallace step aside and allow the students to register.²¹² The national guard remained for several days to prevent violence.

In response to the extensively reported violent chaos in communities fighting desegregation, some states passed laws cutting off state funds to districts that desegregated without conducting a referendum,²¹³ and Southern compliance with *Brown* went from slow to stopped. Arguing against these postponements in 1958, NAACP attorney Thurgood Marshall noted that courts were de-



Hundreds of white students protest at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi, on September 20, 1962, in response to James Meredith's enrollment as the school's first Black student. (AP)

laying integration orders only in response to violence or the threat of violence, and he expressed concern that white children were being taught that violating the law was the way to get what they wanted. "I'm not worried about the Negro kids," he added. "They've been struggling with democracy for years."²¹⁴

Violent resistance to school desegregation persisted for more than a decade after *Brown*. In 1966, when 450 Black students enrolled in Grenada, Mississippi, public schools following a court order to desegregate, local white leaders threatened to fire or evict Black parents who allowed their children to participate, and 200 Black students withdrew.

The Black students who arrived for the first day of school faced a white mob that chased them through the streets and beat them with chains, pipes, and clubs so severely that some had to be hospitalized. The mob violence continued for days without intervention from law enforcement.²¹⁵

In 1967, 13 years after *Brown*, a report by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights observed that "violence against Negroes continues to be a deterrent to school desegregation."²¹⁶

BEYOND BROWN: OPPOSITION INTENSIFIES



Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, Alabama, in which four children were murdered, 1963. (Anthony Falletta/ © The Birmingham News)

Activists eventually achieved passage of landmark civil rights legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which bars racial discrimination in workplaces and public accommodations, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which finally created federal oversight to protect African American voting rights. Building on the Supreme Court's reasoning in *Brown*, federal courts used these new laws and existing constitutional provisions to strike down racial segregation in public parks, pools, beaches, courtrooms, train stations, and city buses.

In response, segregationist forces comprised of activist politicians, cultural commentators, and grassroots community groups used the same infrastructure and identity developed in the fight against school desegregation to oppose the broader civil rights progress that followed.

The full compilation of civil rights heroes and martyrs — including many names we know and remember — is too long to include here, but another group of actors has remained largely anonymous and unacknowledged.

The bus boycott here is a painful economic injury to the company.

But as a matter of the facts of life, Negro leaders should reckon with two realities:

The white man's economic artillery is far superior, better emplaced, and commanded by more experienced gunners.

Second, the white man holds all the offices of government machinery. There will be white rule for as far as the eye can see.

Are those not facts of life?

That roster includes white elected officials who proudly targeted civil rights activists with violence and intimidation; white community leaders, clergy, and educators who chose to remain silent while their friends, relatives, and neighbors harassed, beat, bombed, and murdered black people; white law enforcement officials who protected white supremacy; and Southern lawmakers who weakly condemned the most infamous attacks while obstructing federal civil rights legislation and fanning the flames of segregationist outrage.



In the summer of 1964, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference organized weeks of anti-segregation demonstrations and marches in St. Augustine, Florida, during which more than 200 white residents chased and beat protestors, injuring 50 and sending 15 to the hospital. Many of the Black demonstrators, including Dr. King, were arrested.²¹⁷ Dr. King inspects a bullet hole in the glass door of his rented cottage in St. Augustine, Florida, on June 5, 1964. (AP)

SEGREGATIONIST VIOLENCE UNCHECKED AND ENDORSED

[T]he machinery of government gave mobs immunity. . . . Even when [law enforcement officers] did not actually ride with the Ku Klux Klan or march with the lynch mob themselves, they would not arrest racist killers. A white man charged with killing a Black man could count on his grand jury refusing to indict him, the local district attorney refusing to prosecute him, or the jury refusing to convict him. The machinery of justice . . . endorsed mob violence.²¹⁹

— Black journalist T. Thomas Fortune made these observations in the 1880s during the fight against lynching, but they aptly describe the situation confronting Black civil rights activists generations later.

“For the next 15 years,” a white man named Byron De La Beckwith wrote in a letter to the National Rifle Association in January 1963, “we in Mississippi are going to have to do a lot of shooting to protect our people from bad niggers.”²²⁰ A fertilizer salesman, veteran, and White Citizens’ Council member, De La Beckwith was

a staunch segregationist who once declared, “I believe in segregation like I believe in God.”²²¹ When he was arrested and charged with assassinating Mississippi NAACP Field Secretary Medgar Evers on a June evening in 1963, the state-funded Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission assisted De La Beckwith’s defense. Governor Ross Barnett interrupted his trial during the testimony of Mrs. Myrlie Evers to shake the defendant’s hand, and two different all-white juries declined to convict. Remarking on the outcome of one of De La Beckwith’s two 1964 trials, Governor Barnett quipped, “You can’t be surprised what a jury does or who a woman will marry.”²²²

Dozens of people died in anti-civil rights violence between 1954 and 1968,²²³ and countless more were injured and traumatized while fighting for equal rights. A study of violent civil rights-related incidents in the South documented more than 100 attacks between January 1, 1955, and May 1, 1958.²²⁴ “Although [demonstrators] won several victories,” one scholar observed, “the U.S., particularly the South, became a war zone.”²²⁵



A civil rights advocate is struck by water from fire hoses wielded by police officers during a protest in Birmingham, Alabama, 1963. (Charles Moore/Getty Images)

Between 1955 and 1963, Black civil rights activists were the targets of no fewer than 21 bombings in Birmingham, Alabama (earning it the moniker “Bombingham”).

Multiple attacks targeted movement leader Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and an explosion at 16th Street Baptist Church killed four young Black girls in the church basement and two young Black boys in the violent aftermath.²²⁶

Law enforcement and white elected officials tolerated and sometimes encouraged racial violence and terrorist acts. Many law enforcement officials were members of White Citizens’ Councils or the Ku Klux Klan.²²⁷ All-white juries consistently acquitted those charged with violence against Black people, effectively immunizing perpetrators of racist violence from punishment.

In August 1955, Roy Bryant and J.W. Milam were acquitted of abducting and brutally killing Emmett Till, a Black 14-year-old visiting from Chicago, despite the

testimony of multiple witnesses proving that the men targeted Emmett for allegedly insulting Bryant’s wife.²²⁸ Months later, both men confessed to Emmett’s murder in *Look Magazine*.²²⁹

Dozens of people witnessed the shooting of Lamar Smith, a 63-year-old Black farmer and voting rights activist killed on the lawn of the Lincoln County Courthouse in Brookhaven, Mississippi, in August 1955. The sheriff allowed one of the men involved in the murder to leave the scene covered in blood, and three men arrested for the killing were released without charges when the grand jury refused to indict.²³⁰

In December 1955, 18 months after *Brown*, activists in Montgomery, Alabama, launched a year-long boycott to protest mistreatment on the city’s segregated buses following the arrest of a Black rider named Rosa Parks.²³¹ In 1956 and 1957, four Black churches and the homes of boycott leaders Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Reverend Ralph Abernathy, Reverend Robert Graetz, and E.D. Nixon were bombed.²³² Two white men affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan were indicted after confessing to the blasts, but in May 1957, an all-white jury acquitted them of all charges as spectators cheered.²³³

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST BLACK WOMEN

In Abbeville, Alabama, on a September night in 1944, a gang of white men kidnapped and took turns raping Recy Taylor, a young, Black, married mother, at gunpoint. After the attack, the men blindfolded Mrs. Taylor, drove her back to the road, and left her to walk home.²³⁴

For generations of Black women, racial terror included the constant threat of sexual assault and a complete lack of legal protection. “[T]hroughout the Jim Crow era,” wrote historian Danielle L. McGuire, “white men lured Black women and girls away from home with promises of steady work and better wages; attacked them on the job; abducted them at gunpoint while traveling to or from home, work, or church; raped them as a form of retribution or to enforce rules of racial and economic hierarchy; sexually humiliated and assaulted them on streetcars and buses, in taxicabs and trains, and in other public spaces.”²³⁵

Black women’s resistance to this racialized sexual exploitation helped birth the activism and organized community action that grew into the Civil Rights Movement — even as they bore some of the era’s deepest scars. Between 1940 and 1975, civil rights campaigns in major cities throughout the South were sparked by sexual attacks against Black women.²³⁶ When a local grand jury refused to indict Recy Taylor’s attackers, despite a confes-

sion, the Montgomery NAACP launched an investigation and campaign for justice spearheaded by future bus boycott leader Rosa Parks. None of Mrs. Taylor’s attackers was held accountable.²³⁷

The same communities that lynched and legally executed Black men for mere allegations of sexual misconduct against white women tolerated and excused white men’s sexual attacks against Black women and girls. In May 1956, after four white men kidnapped and raped 16-year-old Annette Butler in Tylertown, Mississippi, only one faced any punishment. At sentencing, Judge Thomas Pickens Brady — a vocal segregationist — scolded the defendant not for committing rape, but for bringing upon himself the shame of interracial sexual relations: “No action could be more in contrast with the beliefs of the segregationist.”²³⁸

After South Carolina senator Strom Thurmond died in 2003 at age 101, the public learned that, at 22, he had fathered the child of an underage Black girl.²³⁹ To some, it was a shocking revelation that seemed to conflict with Thurmond’s 70-year political career spent fervently defending racial separation, inequality, and the superiority of the white race. For others, it was tragically predictable.

“[I]n a climate characterized by fear and abject racial intimidation, the question of whether Carrie Butler, an impoverished maid in the Thurmond family household, freely consented is virtually meaningless,” legal scholar Kimberle Williams Crenshaw wrote in 2004. “The more telling question is



A young girl named Edith Lee Payne participating in the August 28, 1963, March on Washington. (Photo by MPI/Getty Images)

whether there was any way she could freely say no. . . . The protection law promised was empty; after all, statutory rape laws were not written to protect girls like Butler.”²⁴⁰

The story of opposition to the cause of civil rights cannot be separated from the plight of generations of Black women whose sexual victimization went unpunished, because those who condoned that abuse were the same men who defended segregation and fought against racial equality.

In 1965, the *Honolulu Advertiser* profiled Jim Clark, the notorious sheriff of Dallas County, Alabama. Clark told the reporter, “We got a sayin’ down here that every nigger baby girl born is a 12 year old—.” The newspaper cut off the quote, but explained that Clark used an unprintable word. His meaning was that every Negro girl who has reached puberty is fair game for a white man.”²⁴¹

The movement to challenge segregated lunch counters started when Black students staged a sit-in at a Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina, in February 1960. The sit-ins spread and attracted violent responses.²⁴² In 1960, protestors from Tougaloo College staging a sit-in at a Woolworth's in Jackson, Mississippi, were attacked by white men who kicked one student in the face until he lost consciousness and clubbed a teacher to the floor.²⁴³ That same year, white Americans armed with sticks, clubs, pipes, and whips attacked African Americans staging a "wade-in" to protest racial segregation of a public beach in Biloxi, Mississippi.²⁴⁴

When students at Alabama State College, a traditionally Black college in Montgomery, Alabama, staged a sit-in at a segregated lunch counter in the county courthouse in 1960, Governor John Patterson threatened to terminate the college's funding unless it expelled the student organizers and warned that "someone [was] likely to be killed" if the protests continued.²⁴⁵ The college expelled nine students.²⁴⁶

In August 1960, Florida activists organized several days of sit-in protests at the segregated Woolworth's in Jacksonville. On August 27, several thousand white men armed with ax handles and baseball bats and waving Confederate flags attacked African Americans as they walked through a park to join the demonstration. Charlie Davis, a 27-year-old Black man, was killed in the violence that erupted that day; more than 70 people were severely injured and 150 were arrested.²⁴⁷ Mayor W. Haydon Burns told the press: "We regret there were irresponsible elements of the citizenry who would take the law into their own hands, and this includes members of both races."²⁴⁸ When activists renewed the sit-ins in October, the Klan kidnapped a Black 16-year-old, drove him outside town, stripped him naked, and beat him with a belt and a pistol.²⁴⁹

In 1961, SNCC field secretary Bob Moses was taking two Black residents to the Amite County, Mississippi, courthouse to register to vote when he was attacked and severely beaten by a white man. Mr. Moses pressed charges and after he testified at trial against his attacker — Bill Caston, a cousin of the local sheriff — he was advised to leave the county to avoid further violence. Caston was acquitted by an all-white jury.²⁵⁰



Top: Myrlie Evers, the widow of Medgar Evers, comforts their son Darrell at his father's funeral. Medgar Evers was murdered on June 12, 1963, in Jackson, Mississippi. (John Loengard/Life Magazine/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images)

Bottom: Jo Ann Robinson, a Black woman and English professor at Alabama State College, was the "key organizer" and "backbone" of the Montgomery bus boycott. She also faced threats and violent reprisals, including vandalism to her home and car.²⁵¹ She was arrested for organizing the boycott in 1955. (Alabama State University)

CRIMINALIZING THE STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL EQUALITY

Criminal law has been used to maintain racial control since the end of the Civil War.²⁵² In the 1960s, nearly a century after Emancipation, elected officials denounced peaceful civil rights protestors as “criminals” and “law breakers” and used the legal system to harass, beat, arrest, and imprison activists.²⁵³ The law protected white supremacy rather than racial equality, and persecuted those who opposed the racial status quo. “The Community Relations Service (CRS) of the Justice Department, established under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, reported police brutality and other violence against Black people that went unpunished throughout the 1970s,” wrote historian Mary Frances Berry, “while the FBI and the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division spent their time in surveillance of Black individuals and groups.”²⁵⁴

A week after 17-year-old Deborah Bracy and several other Black students integrated the high school in Wetumpka, Alabama, she was arrested, charged with assault, and jailed overnight for poking a white classmate with a pencil.²⁵⁵

Clyde Kennard, a Black veteran, was targeted by the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission after he applied to all-white Mississippi Southern College in Hattiesburg in 1955. When surveillance and investigations failed to discredit him, officials charged him with minor allegations of theft and alcohol possession. An all-white jury convicted Mr. Kennard of stealing \$25 worth of chicken feed and he was sentenced to seven years in prison, where he died from undiagnosed colon cancer in 1963. He was 36 years old.²⁵⁶



Martin Luther King Jr. is booked at the Montgomery Jail in 1958 for civil rights activism. (Charles Moore/Getty Images)

In response to the Montgomery bus boycott, police arrested scores of Black activists and carpool drivers on phony traffic charges and tried to disbar the Black lawyer who filed the lawsuit challenging bus segregation.²⁵⁷



Amelia Boynton is beaten unconscious by state troopers in Selma, Alabama, on March 7, 1965. (© Spider Martin)

Rosa Parks, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Reverend Ralph Abernathy, and boycott organizer Jo Ann Robinson were among 89 leaders arrested and charged with organizing an illegal boycott.²⁵⁸ The grand jury wrote: “In this state we are committed to segregation by custom and law. We intend to maintain it.”²⁵⁹

As a movement leader, Dr. King was routinely targeted by Southern law enforcement. Between the start of the Montgomery bus boycott and his 1968 assassination, Dr. King was arrested, jailed, and fined more than 25 times, in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1956 and 1958; Atlanta in 1960; Albany, Georgia, in 1961 and 1962; Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963 and 1967; St. Augustine, Florida, in 1964; and Selma, Alabama, in 1965.²⁶⁰ He was not alone.

After two Florida A&M students were arrested for sitting in the “white section” of a bus in Tallahassee, the Black community launched a boycott modeled after the Montgomery effort. Boycott organizers and participants faced similar harassment. In October 1956, 21 carpool drivers and nine boycott leaders were arrested for allegedly not having proper car tags. After a three-day trial, they were convicted; some were sentenced to pay fines and some were sent to jail.²⁶¹

THE CENTRALITY OF POLICE VIOLENCE IN MAINTAINING WHITE SUPREMACY

When police officer George Booker stood trial in Selma, Alabama, in 1945 for clubbing to death a 70-year-old Black woman named Niecey Brown while he was off-duty and drunk, his lawyer cautioned the all-white jury, “If we convict this brave man who is upholding the banner of white supremacy by his actions, then we may as well give all our guns to the niggers and let them run the Black Belt.”²⁶² After minutes of deliberation, Booker was acquitted.²⁶³

In the strictly maintained racial caste system that sparked the Civil Rights Movement, police departments were largely restricted to white officers,²⁶⁴ who were exalted as defenders of racial hierarchy.²⁶⁵ Police officers used violence and brutality to maintain racially biased social conditions.

“Almost daily,” the *Louisiana Weekly* wrote on February 11, 1939, “stories of horrible examples of what physical brutality and sworn protectors of the law wreak upon hapless, helpless individuals, which however skeptical cannot refute the evidence of as offered by men’s bruised and scarred bodies.”²⁶⁶ Eleven years later, the same paper reported that African Americans were “alarmed and displeased at the readiness of local police to use their clubs and pistols frequently without provocation. [We] do not expect this coroner to find citizens to have died from ‘natural causes’ when undertakers and private citizens find such persons have been shot through the head or back.”²⁶⁷

Though sparked by the arrest of Rosa Parks, the Montgomery Bus Boycott and the modern Civil Rights Movement also responded to years of mistreatment, violence, and killings by police officers. In the summer of 1950 alone, two African American men were murdered on Montgomery city buses: 20-year-old Thomas Edward Brooks was beaten and shot by police for ignoring a bus driver’s order to board through the back door, and Hilliard Brooks, accused of causing a disturbance, was killed on a bus in a police shooting that also wounded two bystanders.²⁶⁸ In both cases, officers were never held accountable.²⁶⁹

As the Civil Rights Movement taught effective tactics for opposing segregation and racial inequality, police brutality increasingly motivated activists and inspired civil rights protests. Peaceful marches and sit-ins — like the 1963 Children’s Crusade in Birmingham, Alabama, and the attempted Selma-to-Montgomery March in 1965 — were met with police batons, dogs, and firehoses. As one Birmingham city council member explained, “Negroes have been whipped as long as there’s been a jail. It will be that way as long as there’s a decent police force. It has to be that way.”²⁷⁰

“

Once the classic method of lynching was the rope. Now it is the police man’s bullet.

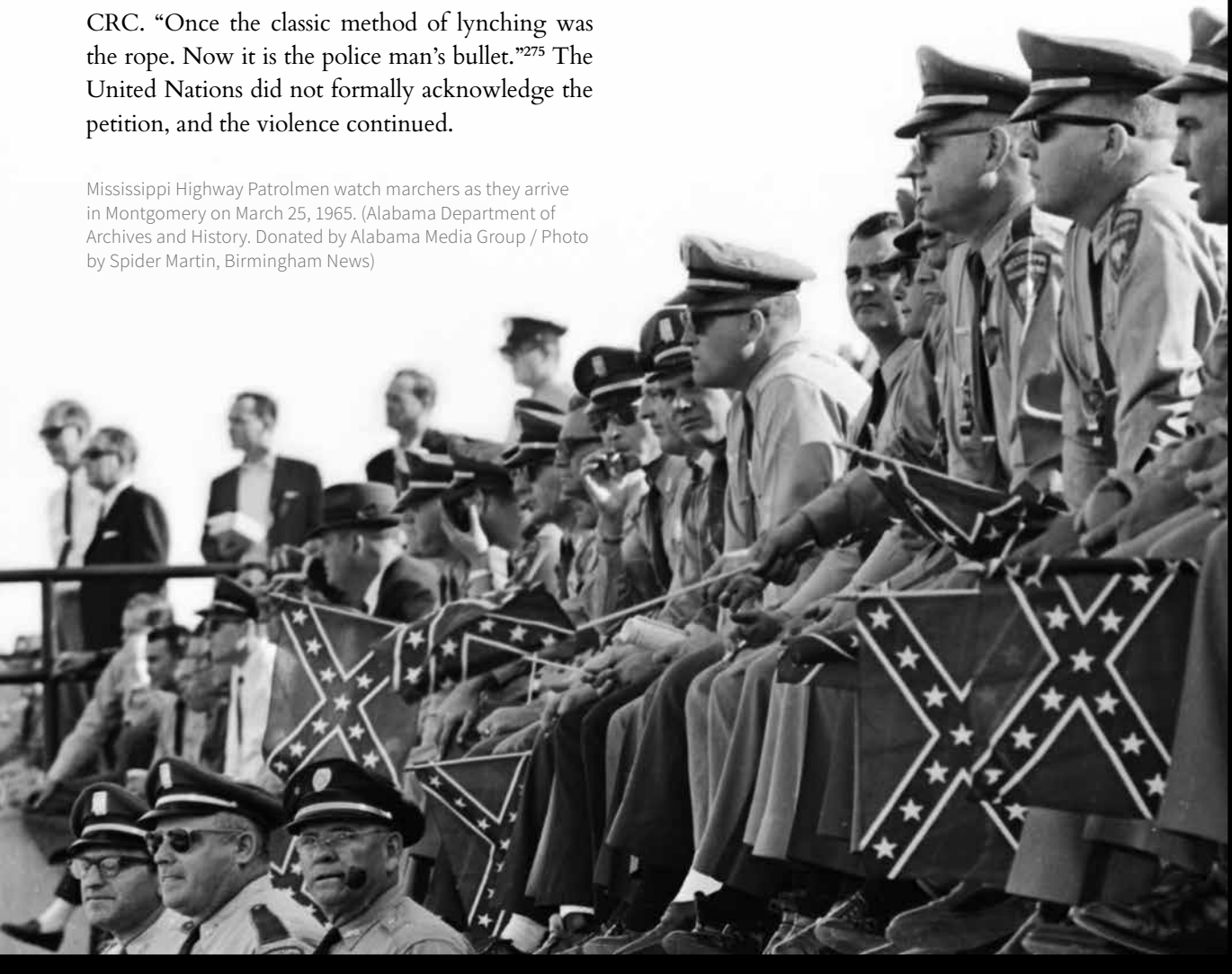
As racial terror lynching raged in the South, millions of African Americans fled to urban centers in the North and West during the early 20th century but found little reprieve.²⁷¹ The Civil Rights Con-

gress (CRC), an interracial civil rights organization founded in Detroit in 1946, filed a petition with the United Nations in 1951 detailing 152 killings and 344 acts of violence suffered by African Americans within the previous six years.²⁷² Titled “We Charge Genocide,” the petition demanded international attention to the plight of Black people in the United States.²⁷³

“There was a time when racist violence had its center in the South, but as the Negro people spread to the north, east, and west seeking to escape the southern hell, the violence . . . followed them,”²⁷⁴ wrote the CRC. “Once the classic method of lynching was the rope. Now it is the police man’s bullet.”²⁷⁵ The United Nations did not formally acknowledge the petition, and the violence continued.

Mississippi Highway Patrolmen watch marchers as they arrive in Montgomery on March 25, 1965. (Alabama Department of Archives and History. Donated by Alabama Media Group / Photo by Spider Martin, Birmingham News)

On February 5, 1946, in Long Island, New York, Private First Class Charles Ferguson and his brother Alfonso were murdered by patrolman Joseph Romeika for protesting segregation at a local café.²⁷⁶ Their brother, Seaman Third Class James Ferguson, was wounded. The three brothers had gathered to wish farewell to Charles, who was about to deploy to Europe.²⁷⁷ As they walked from the café to the bus stop, they ran into Romeika, who pulled his gun and ordered them to stand against the wall with their hands up.²⁷⁸ The brothers complied, but Romeika kick-





New York City police arrest a demonstrator during a march held for 16-year-old Kimani Gray, who was shot to death on a Brooklyn street by plainclothes police officers in 2013. (AP Photo/John Minchillo)

ed Charles in the groin and then shot him in the head. Romeika then “just fired again for no good reason,” killing Alfonso.²⁷⁹ An investigation revealed that none of the brothers was armed. A Nassau County jury refused to indict Romeika, and instead accepted his claim that the shooting was in self-defense.²⁸⁰

Black men returning from military service were deemed particularly dangerous to America’s racial status quo, and police often targeted them. On August 6, 1947, a white rookie patrolman approached a disabled African American veteran named Chris Jones as Mr. Jones was singing with friends near an entrance to Central Park in New York City. The patrolman ordered Mr. Jones to move, then

beat him with a nightstick for moving too slowly. When Mr. Jones tried to shield himself, the officer shot him three times in the stomach. Mr. Jones survived and was charged with disorderly conduct; the NYPD refused to discipline the officer.²⁸¹

That November, a 20-year-old Black military veteran named Roland T. Price argued with a white bartender in a restaurant near the Canadian border in Rochester, New York.²⁸² When the bartender grabbed a pistol and called the police, Patrolman William Hamill entered the restaurant with his gun drawn and ordered Mr. Price to step outside, where five police officers were waiting. They opened fire on Mr. Price and shot him 25 times. The shooting was deemed “justified” even though Mr. Price was

unarmed and there was no evidence he resisted.²⁸³ In October 1945 in Harlem, New York, police “emptied their guns” into an unidentified African American man who was driving on West 144th Street and 8th Avenue. Eyewitnesses said the man had been pursued by a police car but had “his hands raised in surrender” when he was shot. When a crowd gathered in protest, police reinforcements arrived and clubbed the protestors.²⁸⁴ This violent response to protestors would become increasingly familiar as challenges to the racial caste system gained momentum over the next two decades.

On March 7, 1965, state and local police brutally attacked hundreds of civil rights protestors in Selma, Alabama, knocking marchers to the ground, hitting them with sticks, and chasing them on horseback while swinging clubs, whips, and rubber tubing wrapped in barbed wire.²⁸⁵ John Lewis of SNCC and Reverend Hosea Williams of the SCLC led the attempted march to Montgomery, Alabama, to protest the widespread violation of African American voting rights and the recent murder of 26-year-old activist Jimmie Lee Jackson, who was shot and killed by a white state trooper named James Fowler on February 18.²⁸⁶ As a result of the police attack, dozens of civil rights activists were hospitalized with severe injuries and more than 750 were arrested.²⁸⁷

On February 8, 1968, white state troopers fired into a crowd of Black students on the campus of historically Black South Carolina State College in the town of Orangeburg during a protest of a segregated bowling alley.

Police wounded 28 people and killed three: 18-year-old Samuel Hammond, 18-year-old Henry Smith, and 17-year-old Delano Middleton. Nine officers were charged in the shooting and claimed self defense, despite no evidence that any of the protestors were armed. None of the officers was convicted, and Governor Robert McNair blamed the violence on “Black Power advocates.” Cleveland Sellers, a young Black leader of SNCC, was shot in the shoulder during the police attack and ended up the only person punished; he was convicted of rioting and served seven months in jail.²⁸⁸

In the 1960s, Black communities fed up with police brutality responded to police harassment, abuse, and killings with riots in several major cities, including Harlem (1964), Philadelphia (1964), Chicago (1966), Detroit (1967), and Newark (1967).²⁸⁹ In the summer of 1965, a police stop of two young Black men in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles erupted into community unrest when the men were beaten and arrested after an altercation between police and their mother.²⁹⁰ Pockets of rioting soon erupted throughout the 20-block area of Watts and lasted for six days, leaving 34 dead, 1032 injured, nearly 4000 arrested, and \$40 million in damage.²⁹¹

A commission convened to investigate the riot reported in December 1965 that Watts’ Black residents’ dissatisfaction with policing, high unemployment rates, poor housing, and inadequate schools had directly led to the uprising.²⁹² Despite the findings, little was done to address the conditions. In 1991, 26 years later, a federal court concluded that Los Angeles sheriff’s deputies continued to use racially motivated “terrorist-type tactics” to violate the civil rights of African Americans.²⁹³



“For more than a decade — from the mid-1950s until the late 1960s,” wrote Michelle Alexander, officials who opposed civil rights systematically and strategically framed their rhetoric as “calls for law and order, arguing that Martin Luther King Jr.’s philosophy of civil disobedience was a leading cause of crime.”²⁹⁴ Some segregationists even claimed that integration caused crime, and found their rhetoric bolstered by suspect but highly publicized FBI reports of dramatic increases in the national crime rate.²⁹⁵

By criminalizing civil rights activists, opponents of civil rights shifted the public debate from segregation to crime.²⁹⁶

Officials who opposed civil rights systematically and strategically framed their rhetoric as “calls for law and order, arguing that Martin Luther King Jr.’s philosophy of civil disobedience was a leading cause of crime.”

In the 1968 presidential election, both Richard Nixon and former Alabama Governor George Wallace made “law and order” a central theme of their campaigns; combined, they won 57 percent of the vote.²⁹⁷ Nixon ran one ad that “explicitly called on voters to reject the lawlessness of civil rights activists and embrace ‘order’ in the United States.”²⁹⁸

It was a popular message. By 1968, 81 percent of Americans agreed that “law and order has broken down in this country” and the majority blamed “Negroes who start riots” and “Communists.”²⁹⁹

Firemen use high-pressure water jets to hose civil rights protestors in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963.
(Charles Moore/Getty Images, color by Marina Amaral)



CHILDREN BRUTALIZED IN BIRMINGHAM



On May 4, 1963, police arrest and jail Black school children in Birmingham, Alabama for protesting against racial discrimination. (AP Photo/Bill Hudson)

On May 2, 1963, on the orders of Birmingham police chief Eugene “Bull” Connor, more than 1000 African American schoolchildren marching for civil rights in the downtown district were blasted with high-pressure firehoses, clubbed by police, and attacked by police dogs. Led by organizers including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, hundreds of children came out to march day after day, even as they continued to be attacked and arrested.³⁰⁰

“You must understand that a Bull Connor cannot exist without the nods of the status quo people,” Chris McNair explained in

4 Little Girls, a 1997 film depicting the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing that killed his daughter, Denise, and three other young Black girls. “He may be the person who actually does the talking; but believe me the Bull Connors have the blessings of someone else.”³⁰¹

Photographs and television footage showing children being brutally assaulted provoked shock and outrage from many Americans who tolerated segregation but were uncomfortable seeing it so fiercely enforced. “Birmingham’s barbarism highlights an inescapable conclusion,” wrote journalist Ralph McGill. “It is that the nation’s single most important internal problem at this place and time in history is how we deal with minorities.

To say that the security of the nation is in the final balance is no overstatement.”³⁰²

More than 2000 children and adult demonstrators had been arrested by May 10, when activists reached an agreement with the city to stop the demonstrations in exchange for the release of arrested protestors and desegregation of downtown shops. Violent repression continued, however, as segregationists angered by the agreement set off bombs across the city, and the white-controlled school board suspended or expelled children who participated in the march.³⁰³

SOUTHERN LAWMAKERS: OBSTRUCTION AND INCITEMENT

In 1927, white lynch mobs in Burke County, North Carolina, searched for a Black man named Broadus Miller. In an era when allegations against Black people were rarely questioned and Black men accused of serious crimes against white women were more likely to be lynched than tried in court, few expected that Mr. Miller, who was accused of killing a white girl, would live to see the inside of a courtroom. A young attorney named Samuel J. Ervin told the county sheriff to invoke a state law that authorized any citizen to kill a suspect, and then Ervin delivered firearms to the lynch mob. Within days, Mr.

Miller was shot dead and delivered to the county jail, where his corpse was “placed on the steps so the milling thousands could pass by and look at the object of their hatred.”³⁰⁴

Weeks after *Brown* was announced in 1954, Samuel J. Ervin — by then a justice on the North Carolina Supreme Court — was appointed to a vacant seat in the Senate.³⁰⁵ In response to *Brown*, he told a local reporter, “I don’t see why our Constitution meant one thing for 86 years and why it now means another” and called the ruling a



Segregationists taunt peaceful civil rights protestors as they march from Selma to Montgomery in March 1965. (Spider Martin)



After Black students sought service at a segregated Montgomery cafeteria in 1960, angry white residents attacked Black shoppers. A white man with a baseball bat swings at a Black shopper, while another attacks a Black woman with a closed fist. (Charles Moore/Getty Images)

“tragedy.”³⁰⁶ He was sworn in days later. Senator Ervin signed the Southern Manifesto and spent most of his 20 years in Congress opposing desegregation, obstructing civil rights legislation, and backing racial violence and injustice just as he did in Burke County decades earlier.

The war against racial equality was waged in America’s streets, courts, and schools, and elected officials were the generals who directed the campaign on every front. From mayors to governors, state legislators to members of Congress, Southern officials fought tirelessly to defend racial hierarchy and white supremacy, wipe out civil rights activism, and kill federal civil rights legislation.

“

I am willing to go as far and make as great a sacrifice to preserve and insure white supremacy in the social, economic, and political life of our state as any man who lives within her borders.

Former Georgia governor Richard Russell joined the Senate in 1933 and spent more than three decades in office spearheading opposition efforts and filibustering every anti-lynching and civil rights bill that reached the Senate.³⁰⁷ “As one who was born and reared in the atmosphere of the Old South with six generations of my forebears now resting beneath Southern soil,” he wrote in 1935, “I am willing to go as far and make as great a sacrifice to preserve and insure white supremacy in the social, economic, and political life of our state as any man who lives within her borders.”³⁰⁸

When Texans sent Lyndon Johnson to the Senate in 1937, Senator Russell took the future president under his wing and helped him become the youngest-ever majority leader.³⁰⁹ Alongside his mentor, Johnson obstructed every civil rights and anti-lynching bill that came before the Senate. Johnson collaborated with Russell to give civil rights activists a symbolic legislative victory while maintaining the segregationist status quo by passing toothless civil rights legislation, including the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1960.³¹⁰

Southern lawmakers’ strict control over voter registration secured their seats and allowed them to gain seniority that translated to great power in Congress. In six terms as senator from Georgia, Russell chaired several committees, including the all-powerful appropriations committee, and served two terms as president pro tempore.³¹¹ Robert Byrd of West Virginia joined the Senate in 1959, spent his first decades in office as a staunch segregationist, and amassed unparalleled influence during his 51-year career.³¹²

The South’s outsized political power in Congress depended on preventing Black people from voting.³¹³ Because Southern districts included large numbers of Black residents, the disenfranchisement of Southern Black people translated into the super-enfranchisement of Southern white people: in a 50 percent Black Southern district where no Black people voted, each white vote carried twice the influence of a Northern vote cast in a fully enfranchised district. In this way, the disenfranchisement of Southern Black people empowered Southern white voters at the expense of almost everyone else.

FREEDOM RIDERS ATTACKED IN ALABAMA



Left: In Anniston, Alabama, segregationists hurled a fire bomb into a Freedom Rider bus on May 14, 1961. (AP Photo)

Right: On May 20, 1961, two Freedom Riders, John Lewis (left) and James Zwerg (right), were brutally beaten by segregationists in Montgomery, Alabama. (Bettmann/Getty Images)

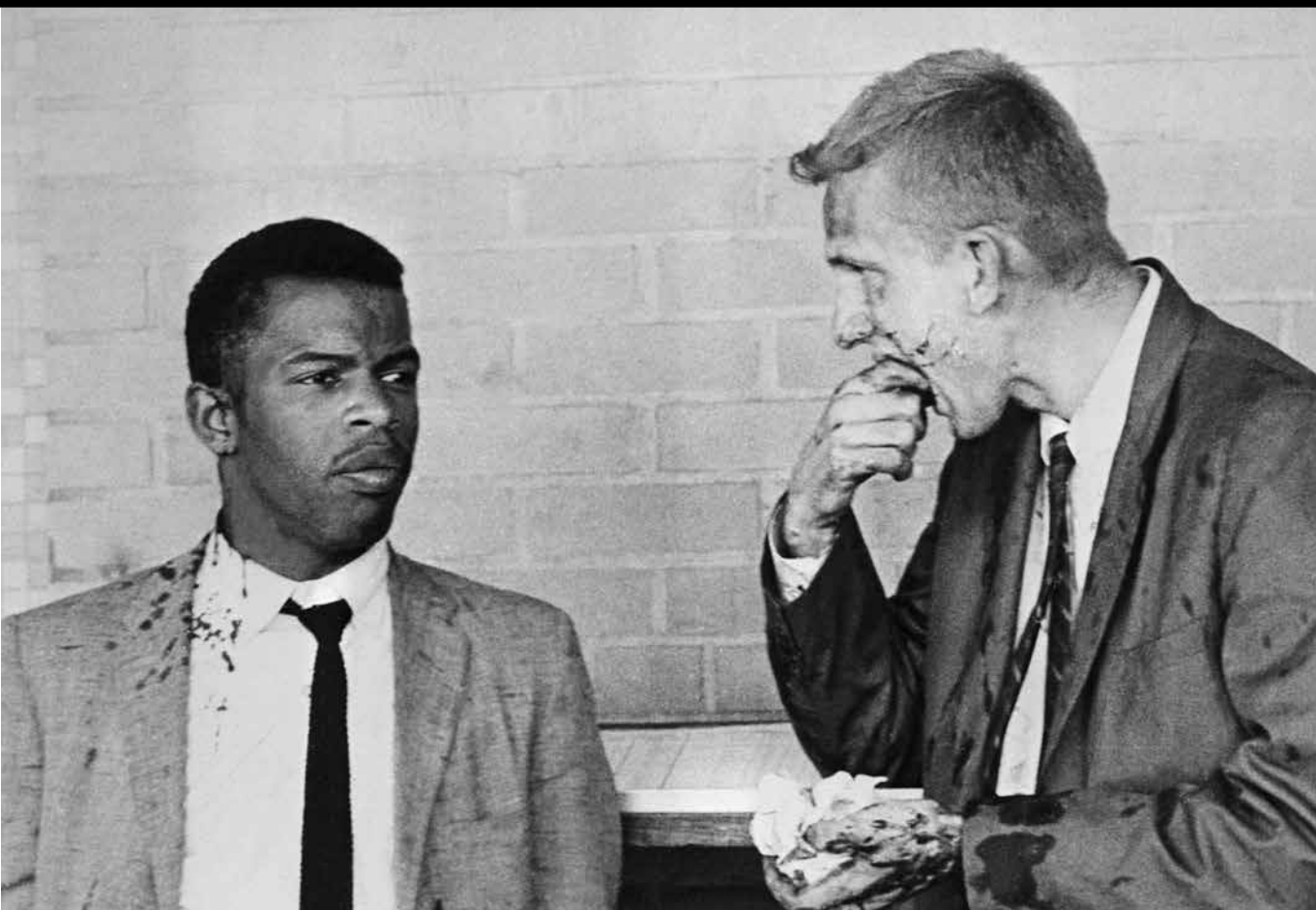
In 1961, an interracial group of civil rights activists set out on a Freedom Ride from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans, Louisiana, to test a recent Supreme Court decision that outlawed racial segregation in interstate bus travel.³¹⁴

When the Freedom Riders' bus arrived in Anniston, Alabama, on May 14, 1961, it was met by a mob of white men armed with pipes, chains, and bats, who smashed windows, slashed tires, and dented the sides of the bus.³¹⁵ Police arrived

20 minutes after the attack began and made no arrests. They escorted the crippled bus to the city limits and then abandoned it.³¹⁶ When flat tires forced the driver to stop at a service station shortly after, another armed white mob trapped the riders in the bus and threw a firebomb inside, then viciously beat the riders who escaped.³¹⁷

Two days later in Birmingham, police chief Eugene "Bull" Connor allowed a white mob of several hundred people to attack the riders with baseball bats, hammers, and pipes, leaving several seriously injured.³¹⁸

The next day, a new group of riders continued on to Montgomery, where they were abandoned by police and attacked by a white mob of 200 people at the downtown Greyhound bus station. About 20 people were injured in the attack, including reporters and photographers covering the Freedom Rides for national media.³¹⁹



That evening, civil rights leaders including Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth organized an evening service at Montgomery's First Baptist Church in support of the riders. While more than 1000 people sang and listened to sermons inside the church, white men surrounded the building, vandalized parked cars, and threatened to set the church on fire. When federal marshals tried to intervene, they were pelted with bricks and bottles by white rioters, who then overturned cars, fired bullets and fire-bombs at local Black residents, and attacked Black people in the street.³²⁰

Alabama Governor John Patterson refused to condemn the white rioters, and instead blamed the Freedom Riders for the violence they suffered in Alabama. During his 1958 campaign, Patterson had warned that integration would cause "violence, disorder, and bloodshed" and had refused to repudiate an endorsement from the Ku Klux Klan.³²¹

"If the Federal Government really wants to help in this unfortunate situation," Patterson told reporters in Montgomery, "they will encourage these outside agitators to go home. We have the means and the ability to keep the peace in Alabama without any outside help."³²²



On February 27, 1960, young white men attack a sit-in demonstrator at Woolworth's lunch counter in Nashville, Tennessee. (Jimmy Ellis/Nashville Public Library)

“

We had to flee in the night. We are the American refugees from the terror in the South, all because we wanted to vote.

—GUS COURTS, TESTIMONY BEFORE SENATE COMMITTEE, FEBRUARY 28, 1957.

To cultivate the support of white constituents, Southern politicians seized every opportunity to denounce racial progress and incite white people's outrage.

Senator James Eastland from Mississippi, known as “The Voice of the White South,”³²³ unashamedly fanned the

flames of racial violence in Belzoni, Mississippi, where Reverend George Lee, local NAACP co-founder and the first Black voter to register in the county since Reconstruction, was shot to death on May 7, 1955. Soon after, activist Gus Courts was ambushed and shot, forcing his family to “flee in the night” as “American refugees from the terror in the South, all because we wanted to vote.”³²⁴ After these shootings, Eastland told a White Citizens' Council meeting in Belzoni: “My friends, we are engaged in one of the greatest conflicts in the history of our country.” He encouraged his constituents to identify as soldiers defending their whiteness under siege. “The fight to protect our racial identity,” Eastland declared, “is basic to our whole civilization.”³²⁵



cal program” that was “unconstitutional, un-American,” and “lined with bribes and blackmail.”³²⁷

After Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, Lyndon Johnson, now president, again faced pressure from civil rights leaders to pass civil rights legislation. This time, he worked to pass the bill that Kennedy had proposed. The sweeping Civil Rights Act of 1964 — which outlawed discrimination in employment, education, and public accommodations³²⁸ — passed despite Southern lawmakers’ rabid opposition, public condemnation, and racist rhetoric both on and off the Congressional Record.

In the House, the legislation was described as containing “vicious assaults upon the Constitution.”³²⁹

In the Senate, Southerners condemned the Civil Rights bill as “unnecessary, unwise, and beyond the realm of reason.”³³⁰ They told their constituents it was a “complete blueprint for the totalitarian state,” “a threatened crime against the whole philosophy of liberty,”³³¹ and that it would “confer the power of dictatorship . . . upon the president.”³³²

By 1963, John F. Kennedy had been elected president, Lyndon Johnson was his vice president, and white segregationists feared the White House was too cozy with civil rights leaders. In 1961, President Kennedy and Attorney General Robert Kennedy negotiated safe passage out of Alabama for Freedom Riders, and in 1963 the president used federal power to force Alabama Governor George Wallace to stand down as Black students enrolled at the state’s flagship university. By May 1963, polls reported that 62 percent of white Southerners felt that the Kennedy administration was “pushing racial integration too fast.”³²⁶

Strom Thurmond denounced Kennedy’s proposed civil rights legislation as “a vicious, dangerous, and impracti-

Senator Allen Ellender of Louisiana proclaimed that African Americans would never gain acceptance until they obtained “the moral, intellectual, and cultural standards of the white race . . . one need only look to Ethiopia, Liberia, or Haiti to put an end to the charge that the white man has kept the Negro from improving himself.”³³³

In 1965, President Johnson oversaw passage of the Voting Rights Act, which outlawed most of the policies that disenfranchised Black voters in the South, established clear standards and enforcement provisions for challenging violations of voting rights, and directly threatened the seats of many Southern politicians.³³⁴



Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers a sermon at Ebenezer Baptist Church, in Atlanta, Georgia. (Photo by © Flip Schulke/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)

THE LEGACY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

Today, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. is among the most recognized and revered leaders of the Civil Rights Movement. But during his lifetime, the eloquent minister's prominence as a national figure, and his skill as a spokesman and leader, attracted powerful opposition.

Dr. King was arrested more than a dozen times for leading nonviolent civil rights demonstrations;³³⁵ repeatedly threatened with violence and hanged in effigy;³³⁶ and covertly targeted by FBI officials who labeled him “the most dangerous and effective Negro leader in the country.”³³⁷

In 1966, a poll revealed that 63 percent of Americans held a negative view of Dr. King³³⁸ — reflecting the majority's deep-seated opposition to civil rights. When he was shot and killed on a Memphis hotel balcony on April 4, 1968, national newspapers reported widespread shock and sorrow, and leaders like President Lyndon Johnson and Senator Robert Kennedy urged the nation to unite in his memory.³³⁹

But many of those who disfavored Dr. King remained hostile to him. White youth openly celebrated Dr. King's murder in school and on the streets.³⁴⁰ A study conducted 12 days after the assassination found that 59 percent of Southern white schoolchildren — including 73 percent of white boys — said they were indifferent to or pleased by Dr. King's murder, and these responses correlated to the children's perception of their parents' views.³⁴¹

Adults were less public — but not silent — about their hostility. On April 10, the Jackson, Mississippi, *Clarion-Ledger* ran a column that called Dr. King “a victim of his own doctrine” and equated the nonviolent civil rights protests he led with the fatal gunshot that killed him. “This is the bitter fruit of anarchy,” wrote Tom Ethridge, “because once people are persuaded that they have a moral right to violate the law, there is no telling where it will end or who will be victims.”³⁴²

The same day, the *Journal Star* (in Lincoln, Nebraska) printed an anonymous letter:

“Dr. King and his followers have said we have a sick nation, but I feel that we have a sick President, who would proclaim a national day of mourning and the flags flown at half-mast on all government installations, in honor of a man who, wherever he went, caused in this nation violence and destruction.”

“I don’t believe that any person, Black or white, whose mere presence in that city caused riots and chaos, should be nationally honored. . . . All of us in our own way fight for what we believe in, but we don’t get honored if it is a destructive fight.”³⁴³

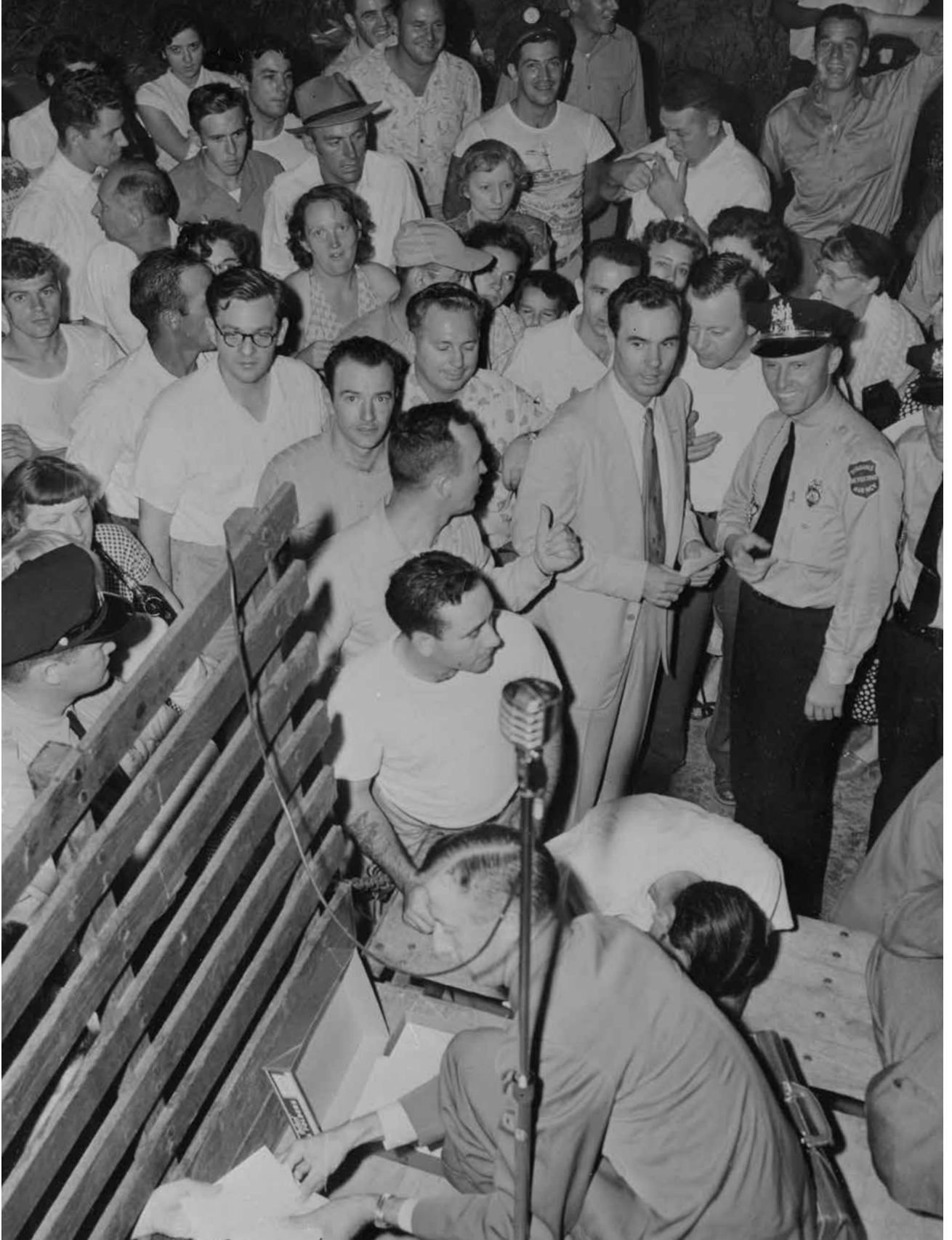
Lester Maddox, Georgia’s segregationist governor, refused to allow Dr. King to lie in state.³⁴⁴ More than 15 years later, an effort to honor Dr. King with a federal holiday became mired in controversy. Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina denounced Dr. King as a “Marxist” who remained “a source of tension” and did not represent the kind of “shared values” warranting a national holiday.³⁴⁵ Strom Thurmond, John Stennis, Russell Long, and other aging segregationists voted against the bill, but it passed and became law in 1983.³⁴⁶

Opposition to civil rights and racial equality cannot be dismissed as the extremism of a few marginalized vigilantes. Like the lynchings prevalent in generations past, school closures, economic reprisals, arrests and harassment, mob violence, bombings, and murder were bold, public acts that implicated the entire community.

Hundreds, if not thousands, of white jurors refused to hold white people accountable for crimes committed against Black activists. Thousands of law enforcement officials and officers failed to protect Black citizens from harassment, attacks, shootings, and bombings, and many police violently abused and even killed Black activists. Public officials who spouted racist rhetoric from their campaign podiums, shut down public schools and parks to prevent integration, and encouraged violence against civil rights activists represented white citizens who applauded their speeches, endorsed their actions, and repeatedly re-elected them to local, state, and national office.³⁴⁷

People like James Eastland, Strom Thurmond, and George Wallace portrayed white Southerners as patriots rather than racists; as brave protectors of their culture rather than perpetrators of violent attacks against men, women, and children; and as defenders of state sovereignty against an overreaching federal government intent on destroying their way of life rather than violators of constitutional rights. “We are about to embark on a great crusade,” Eastland told a gathering of pro-segregation activists in 1955. “A crusade to restore Americanism and return the control of our government to the people.”³⁴⁸

Opponents of racial equality embraced this identity, which empowered them to cast their immoral behavior as moral and to feel pride rather than shame as they used economic intimidation, criminalization, bombings, beatings, and even murder to defend white supremacy. This identity became the civil rights era’s most enduring legacy.



The National Association for the Advancement of White People holds a rally on October 5, 1954, featuring its president, Bryant Bowles, who led a successful effort to halt desegregation in Milford, Delaware. (Bettmann/Getty Images)

PRESERVING RACIAL INEQUALITY UP NORTH

“

The average man in the Northern states agrees entirely with the position that we take...

— SENATOR JAMES EASTLAND, WHITE CITIZENS' COUNCIL MEETING IN MISSISSIPPI, 1957.³⁴⁹



White residents of Chicago's northwest side shout and shake their fists at civil rights marchers protesting racial discrimination in housing, August 7, 1966. (AP Photo/stf)

White opposition to civil rights was largely a Southern movement, but it spread quickly. Between 1941 and the late 1970s, some five million African Americans fled to the North and West, marking the first time in American history that a large proportion of African Americans lived outside the South.³⁵⁰ Southern segregationists saw potential allies in the North and West.

Television cameras recorded Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark's brutal beating of Reverend C.T. Vivian in Selma, Alabama, during a February 1965 voting rights demonstration. When it was broadcast on television, Clark received fan mail from across the country. "Sorry

there are not enough men with your guts and convictions in this country," read one wire from Porterville, California. "Seventy percent of the messages are favorable," Clark told a reporter, "and more of it's favorable from the North than the South."³⁵¹ Later that year, Clark was the invited speaker at a meeting of the Los Angeles White Citizens' Council, where he condemned the Watts uprising as the fault of "Martin Luther King and company and the Communist conspiracy."³⁵² Meanwhile, Reverend Vivian, an aide to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was charged with contempt of court.³⁵³

As civil rights gains spread, white residents of major cities outside the South blocked efforts to end racial discrimination in housing, education, and public services. Elected officials used legislation and violence to fight racial equality, deny Black people access to public services, and exacerbate the poverty that plagued Black neighborhoods.

Some of the earliest clashes took place in border states like Maryland and Delaware. By 1950, Baltimore had six whites-only swimming pools; the one pool for African Americans was so crowded that children had to swim in shifts.³⁵⁴ Threats of violence

delayed implementation of a 1956 court order to integrate the pools, and in 1962, a mob of 1000 white people threw stones and bottles at African American children swimming in a traditionally white pool.³⁵⁵

In 1960, 90 percent of Baltimore restaurants refused to serve African Americans.³⁵⁶ When a group of high school and college students boycotted a segregated lunch counter, Chief Judge of the Maryland Court of Appeals Robert Bell recounted:

People were spitting and yelling and screaming at us; the epithets were ones you would imagine they would be in the context of that situation. Some people on the picket line were hit, although there was not as much physical violence as I thought there might be. The police were standing about, watching, but they didn't intervene to protect us from getting hit and they didn't arrest anyone.³⁵⁷

When 11 Black students integrated the white high school in the southern Delaware town of Milford in fall 1954, the local school board president predicted it would “blow the town apart.”³⁵⁸ Plans for a school dance triggered a mass meeting attended by some 1500 white residents, and after 800 people signed a petition opposing an integrated dance,³⁵⁹ school officials canceled the event.³⁶⁰ The Black students were told to stay home for several days, and when they returned to school, police had to escort them through mobs shouting, “The Bible gives authority for segregation!” and “We just don't want our children to go to school with Negroes!”³⁶¹ Milford expelled the Black students and the NAACP sued, sparking more cross burnings, rallies, and pro-segregation demonstrations. The next year, the Delaware Supreme Court ruled that Milford could delay integration while awaiting guidance from the United States Supreme Court.³⁶² Segregation persisted in Milford for 15 years, until the last segregated school closed in 1970.³⁶³



Young white men with a Confederate flag and racist sign jeer at civil rights marchers in the southwest side of Chicago, August 5, 1966. (AP Photo)

Employment discrimination was a major barrier to economic advancement for Black people in the North and West. Hiring restrictions that barred Black people in Detroit and Chicago from many positions and promotions during the 1940s war boom persisted long after the war ended.³⁶⁴ Many trade unions barred Black workers, and non-union employers often offered Black applicants lower pay and lesser positions, if they were hired at all.³⁶⁵

From 1960 onward, the unemployment rate for Black Americans stayed at double the rate for white Americans.³⁶⁶ Even after the Civil Rights Act outlawed racial discrimination in employment, job advertisements in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Chicago Tribune* sought “white applicants only.”³⁶⁷

Housing segregation shaped urban landscapes in the North, where housing shortages penned Black migrants in overcrowded and overpriced neighborhoods. Housing segregation enabled school segregation, which in many cities remained a vestige of segregated neighborhoods long after segregation laws were struck down.

In Philadelphia, more than 200 African Americans attempting to rent or buy homes at the edges of the city’s segregated residential districts were attacked during the first six months of 1955 alone. Black residents found themselves trapped in the North Philadelphia ghetto for years.³⁶⁸

In Los Angeles, more than 100 African Americans were targeted with violence when they tried to move out of segregated Black neighborhoods between 1950 and 1965.³⁶⁹ These attacks, including dynamite bombings, cross burnings, and rocks thrown through windows, led to only one arrest and prosecution.³⁷⁰



Police beat a Black man in Harlem, New York, in 1964. (AP Photo)

The Chicago Housing Authority invested in segregation by concentrating more than 10,000 public housing units in isolated African American neighborhoods — a policy the Supreme Court found in 1976 violated racial desegregation laws.³⁷¹

Slavery and codified racial segregation have come to be thought of as uniquely Southern phenomena, but it is clear that the legacy of white supremacy and racial bigotry was a powerful force in the North and West. Inspired by Southern segregationists, there is a clear and undeniable record of pervasive discrimination based on race that spread across America. The legacy of this history haunts us still.

**“SEGREGATION
FOREVER”:
LEADERS OF
WHITE
SUPREMACY**

The influential and widespread rejection of racial equality by individuals, communities, officials, and institutions followed in the tradition of earlier generations of white supremacists who stood determined to thwart civil rights progress. That common cause inspired collective action among white citizens in many parts of the country that vaulted new leaders to national prominence and into powerful political positions where many outlasted the movement itself.

When we remember the names, actions, faces, and words of segregationist leaders, we better understand their nationwide campaign to reject racial equality and maintain white supremacy, and recognize the power and influence they wielded — then and now.



WILLIAM RAINACH

(1913–1978)

STATE LEGISLATOR, LOUISIANA

“

“I do not believe the two societies should mix.”³⁷²

Widely regarded as one of the most virulent opponents of civil rights in the Louisiana State Legislature, William “Willie” Rainach, whose tenure lasted from 1940 to 1960, stridently opposed *Brown* and fought to delay its implementation. While Rainach was chair of the Joint Legislative Committee to Maintain Segregation, the legislature directed the state board of education to nullify graduation certificates from any integrated public school, withheld books and lunches from integrated schools, and criminalized all efforts to violate segregation laws.³⁷³ In Rainach’s words, “A vote against these bills is an open invitation to the carpetbaggers, scalawags, and National Association for the Advancement of the [sic] Colored People to integrate our schools.”³⁷⁴ In 1958, Rainach and other leaders of the White Citizens’ Council mounted a campaign to systematically disenfranchise thousands of Black voters by requiring literacy tests and targeting the credentials of Black registrants for scrutiny. These tactics reduced the Black electorate by 85 percent in Washington Parish and 75 percent in Ouachita Parish — until litigation by the Justice Department restored some 1400 voters to the rolls.³⁷⁵

(LSU Shreveport Archives)



VIRGINIA JOHNSON

(1928–2007)

POLITICIAN, ARKANSAS

“

“I’m a segregationist. Aren’t we all?”³⁷⁶

Virginia Johnson was an Arkansas politician and the wife of Arkansas Supreme Court Justice Jim Johnson. As a member of the staff of the Arkansas State Senate from 1951 to 1953, Johnson promoted her husband’s ballot initiative to amend the state constitution to require the Arkansas Legislature to defy *Brown* “in every constitutional manner.”³⁷⁷ The campaign succeeded and the amendment remained in the state constitution until it was repealed in 1990.³⁷⁸ Johnson supported segregation throughout her career. She ran for governor in 1968 on a platform that publicly affirmed her segregationist views, and despite losing the election,³⁷⁹ she remained active in Arkansas politics and strongly supported George Wallace’s presidential campaign.³⁸⁰ Johnson never renounced segregation. In 2005, she wrote: “The people of Arkansas have solid convictions and, if offered the opportunity, they will demonstrate once again that they prefer their own.”³⁸¹

(AP)



OLIN D. JOHNSTON

(1896–1965)

GOVERNOR, U.S. SENATOR, SOUTH CAROLINA

“

“I don’t run from niggers, but I run them from me.”³⁸²

Olin DeWitt Talmadge Johnston was governor of South Carolina from 1935 to 1939 and 1943 to 1945, and was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1944, 1950, 1956, and 1962. Johnston supported President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, which put him at odds with other segregationists, including his 1938 opponent for governor, “Cotton Ed” Smith.³⁸³ Despite this economic liberalism, Johnston’s championing of the common man did not extend to the civil rights of African Americans. He was unapologetically racist in his rhetoric, opposed all federal efforts to weaken segregation, and attempted to maintain all-white primary elections even after the Supreme Court declared them unconstitutional.³⁸⁴ In 1944, Johnston refused to use his powers as governor to stop the execution of George Stinney, a 14-year-old Black boy convicted of killing two white girls in a sham trial with no investigation or evidence, even though Johnston had granted clemency to a white man just six years before. In 1985, on the 50th anniversary of his first inauguration as governor, a marker honoring Johnston was erected in his native Abbeville County and the local highway was named for him.³⁸⁵ Strom Thurmond was among the honored guests at the dedication.³⁸⁶

(Olin D. Johnston Papers, South Carolina Political Collections, The University of South Carolina Libraries)



HORATIO SEYMOUR

(1810–1886)

GOVERNOR, NEW YORK

“

“This is a white man’s country: Let white men rule.”³⁸⁷

Horatio Seymour, governor of New York from 1853 to 1854 and 1863 to 1864, was outspoken in his support for Southern slavery. At a campaign rally, he opposed the Emancipation Proclamation, warning that “[t]he scheme for an immediate emancipation and general arming of the slaves throughout the South is a proposal for the butchery of women and children, for scenes of lust and rapine, of arson and murder, unparalleled in the history of the world.”³⁸⁸ In 1868, Seymour ran for president on the Democratic ticket, billing himself as the “white man’s candidate”³⁸⁹ and accusing his opponent, Ulysses Grant, of standing for “Negro supremacy.”³⁹⁰ A prominent reminder that pro-slavery views were not confined to the South, Seymour lost the election but remained active in New York politics and contributed to the foundational racial rhetoric that politicians called upon well into the next century.

(Library of Congress)



(Library of Congress)

THEODORE BILBO

(1877–1947)

GOVERNOR, U.S. SENATOR, MISSISSIPPI

Theodore Bilbo served as governor of Mississippi from 1916 to 1920 and 1928 to 1932, and as a U.S. senator from 1935 to 1947. A towering figure among white supremacist and segregationist politicians, Bilbo praised Nazi racial philosophy³⁹² and was famous for his extreme and inflammatory rhetoric. In a 1938 filibuster against anti-lynching legislation, Bilbo said on the Senate floor that the bill would “open the floodgates of hell in the South” by encouraging Black men to rape white women.³⁹³ In 1946, after four white men beat a Black Army veteran for attempting to register to vote, Senator Bilbo delivered a radio address urging every “red-blooded Anglo-Saxon man in Mississippi to resort to any means to keep hundreds of Negroes from the polls in the

July 2nd primary.” He continued, “And if you don’t know what that means, you are just not up on your persuasive measures.”³⁹⁴ Southern senators successfully defended Bilbo against an NAACP-led effort to remove him from office for inciting violence against Black voters.³⁹⁵

Before succumbing to cancer at age 69, Bilbo spent the last weeks of his life writing a book, *Take Your Choice: Separation or Mongrelization*, in which he outlined his fears of “race-mixing” and advocated for the relocation of African Americans to West Africa. (He had proposed a relocation bill in the Senate in 1938, but it failed.)³⁹⁶ Bilbo never repudiated his racist views and remained an influential figure among leading segregationists in the South long after his death.

“

It is essential to the perpetuation of our Anglo-Saxon civilization that white supremacy be maintained and to maintain our civilization there is only one solution, and that is either by segregation within the United States, or by deportation of the entire Negro race.³⁹¹

BOB JONES

(1883–1968)

EVANGELIST, SOUTH CAROLINA



(Bettmann/Getty Images)

Robert “Bob” Jones was an evangelist and radio broadcaster who founded segregated Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina. With financial backing from the Klu Klux Klan, Jones began his career as an itinerant evangelist, preaching to millions of people across the United States.³⁹⁸ By the 1920s he was among the most famous evangelists in the country. His university opened in 1927 as a private, Christian, all-white college that banned African American students throughout Jones’s lifetime.³⁹⁹ Now a popular destination for conservative presidential candidates on the campaign trail, Bob Jones University did not admit Black students until 1971 and banned interracial dating until a visit from George W. Bush drew press coverage that forced the school to withdraw the

policy in 2000.⁴⁰⁰ Jones’s commitment to segregation was rooted in his Christianity and was a foundation of his belief system. In a radio address on Easter Sunday in 1960, he explained his conviction that God was the author of segregation and that opposition to segregation amounted to opposition to God.⁴⁰¹ The sermon, titled *Is Segregation Scriptural?*, was printed and widely distributed to students at Bob Jones University well into the 1980s.⁴⁰²

“

If we would just listen to the Word of God and not try to overthrow God’s established order, we would not have any trouble. God never meant for America to be a melting pot to rub out the line between the nations. That was not God’s purpose for this nation.³⁹⁷



ORVAL FAUBUS

(1910–1994)

GOVERNOR, ARKANSAS

“

“I will never open the public schools as integrated institutions.”⁴⁰³

Orval Faubus, governor of Arkansas from 1955 to 1967, is most widely remembered for defying a federal order to desegregate Little Rock Central High School. On September 2, 1957, Faubus called in the Arkansas National Guard to block nine Black students, the Little Rock Nine, from enrolling at all-white Central High.⁴⁰⁴ A federal court ordered that the guardsmen be removed, but an angry mob of white men, women, and youth blocked the school entrance.⁴⁰⁵ To restore order and enforce the court’s ruling, President Dwight Eisenhower federalized the Arkansas National Guard and dispatched the Army to escort the Black students into the school.⁴⁰⁶ Faubus was not as staunch a segregationist as some Southern governors, but under pressure from hardliners and his own constituents, he embraced the segregationist cause for political gain.⁴⁰⁷ Though his stand did not stop school desegregation in Arkansas, it cemented his identity as a segregationist leader and earned him four more terms as governor.⁴⁰⁸

(Francis Miller/The LIFE Picture Collection/Getty Images)



JACK GREMILLION

(1914–2001)

ATTORNEY GENERAL, LOUISIANA

“

“I have fought integration with all the talent and vigor I possess.”⁴⁰⁹

As Louisiana’s attorney general from 1956 to 1971, Jack Gremillion played prominently in state efforts to resist desegregation. After a federal judge ordered New Orleans public schools desegregated, Gremillion drafted a new law giving the state legislature exclusive authority to determine schools’ racial composition.⁴¹⁰ In response, a panel of three federal judges declared the state law unconstitutional, ordered state officials to cease interfering with integration, and restored control of desegregation to the school board.⁴¹¹ Gremillion famously was held in contempt of court for calling the federal court a “den of iniquity,”⁴¹² and he successfully used litigation to bar the NAACP from operating in Louisiana for a period.⁴¹³ Gremillion’s tenure as attorney general ended in 1972 when he was convicted of federal perjury charges and sentenced to three years in prison.⁴¹⁴

(State Library of Louisiana)



MRS. J.E. ANDREWS

PRESIDENT, WOMEN’S NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
THE PRESERVATION OF THE WHITE RACE, GEORGIA

“

“All we need to do is to insist that
the Negro get back in line.”⁴¹⁵

Mrs. J.E. Andrews served as president of the Women’s National Association for the Preservation of the White Race, an organization that promoted white supremacist propaganda in the early 1930s.⁴¹⁶ Andrews was an especially vocal critic of anti-lynching activism and she accused the NAACP of being dedicated to promoting the ruin of the “pure white race.” She published a pamphlet advocating the need for a militia to protect whites.⁴¹⁷ In a confrontation with the Association of Southern Women for the Prevention of Lynching, a white organization, Andrews distinguished her group as “an organization of white mothers [that] has arisen to defend our girls, both against Negro men and you.”⁴¹⁸ *Georgia Women’s World*, which her organization published in the 1930s, featured sensationalized messages, such as “White People! We again beg you to wake up before your heritage and your race are obliterated.”⁴¹⁹

(From *The Georgia Woman’s World*, Sep. 1, 1936)



EUGENE TALMADGE

(1888–1946)
GOVERNOR, GEORGIA

“

“The South loves the Negro in his place —
but his place is at the back door.”⁴²⁰

A dominant figure in Georgia politics and a virulent racist, Eugene Talmadge was elected governor in 1932 after he ran on a white supremacist and segregationist platform, and won re-election three times.⁴²¹ Talmadge defended racial hierarchy and demanded the same from others. In the early 1940s, when he suspected that the dean and faculty at the University of Georgia were not committed to racial segregation, Talmadge expelled members of the Board of Regents, fired professors, and censored books that promoted social equality. The Ku Klux Klan supported Talmadge’s unprecedented actions and even orchestrated a scheme to get “evidence” against the dean by kidnapping one of his Black employees. The resulting scandal cost Talmadge the 1942 election, but voters overwhelmingly returned him to office in 1946 after a campaign so steeped in racist rhetoric that it sparked violence across the state. The FBI later investigated Talmadge for inciting mob violence and sanctioning the 1946 lynching of two Black couples in Walton County in an effort to sway rural white voters during his campaign.⁴²² The case was dropped after a federal grand jury claimed it could not identify any members of the lynch mob.⁴²³

LBP45-017a, Lane Brothers Commercial Photographers Photographic Collection, 1920–1976. Photographic Collection, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University Library.



Eugene "Bull" Connor (AP Photo)

EUGENE "BULL" CONNOR

(1897–1973)

PUBLIC SAFETY DIRECTOR, BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

Eugene "Bull" Connor was an Alabama politician and notorious segregationist with close ties to the Ku Klux Klan.⁴²⁵ As Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety during the Civil Rights Movement, Connor facilitated — and in some cases ordered — acts of violence against peaceful protestors. In 1961, he allowed a white mob armed with pipes to attack the Freedom Riders, Black and white college students who rode buses through the South to challenge illegal segregation in interstate transportation. When the students arrived in Birmingham, Connor intentionally failed to protect them, having promised local Klan members that he would "see to it that 15 or 20 minutes would elapse before the police arrived."⁴²⁶ The Freedom Riders were brutally beaten,

and several suffered serious injuries.

In 1963, the entire world witnessed Connor's brutality when Martin Luther King Jr. came to Birmingham to lead a children's protest against racial segregation. Connor ordered the fire department to blast nonviolent protestors — most of them children — with high-pressure firehoses and commanded police to

attack them with batons and police dogs.⁴²⁷ Televised images of demonstrators being bitten by dogs, beaten by officers, and slammed into walls by firehoses cemented Bull Connor's role as a national icon of racist ideology and segregationist violence.⁴²⁸ Connor never repudiated his defense of racial segregation or denounced his use of police violence.⁴²⁹

“

All you gotta do is tell them you're going to bring the dogs. Look at 'em run. Bring the dogs anyway, captain.⁴²⁴



(Library of Congress)

GEORGE WALLACE

(1919–1998)

GOVERNOR, ALABAMA

The political legacy of four-time Alabama governor and four-time presidential candidate George Wallace is enduring and increasingly relevant. Wallace’s 1962 gubernatorial campaign used the slogan “Stand up for Alabama,” and he vowed to fight integration at the University of Alabama.⁴³¹ Wallace gave a furious inauguration speech, written by Ku Klux Klan organizer Asa E. Carter, in which he condemned integration and federal intervention in state affairs.⁴³² Six months later, Wallace launched himself into the national spotlight by physically blocking two Black students, Vivian Malone and James Hood, from enrolling at the University of Alabama.⁴³³ The dramatic “stand in the schoolhouse door” was broadcast on national television, and within a week,

Wallace received over 100,000 telegrams commending his actions.

Wallace developed a political identity that combined racial demagoguery and fiery rhetoric to defend segregation under the veneer of “states’ rights.” By appealing to racial sentiments, Wallace gained the support of voters who felt threatened by increasing Black political power.⁴³⁴ His overt appeals to segregationists later burdened Wallace’s presidential campaigns and he never reached national office. Today, a portion of Interstate 10 in Alabama and community colleges in the cities of Dothan and Eufaula bear George Wallace’s name. He remains one of the most infamous and influential segregationist leaders of this era.

political power.⁴³⁴ His overt appeals to segregationists later burdened Wallace’s presidential campaigns and he never reached national office. Today, a portion of Interstate 10 in Alabama and community colleges in the cities of Dothan and Eufaula bear George Wallace’s name. He remains one of the most infamous and influential segregationist leaders of this era.

“

In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny . . . and I say . . . segregation now . . . segregation tomorrow . . . segregation forever.⁴³⁰



LESTER MADDOX

(1915–2003)
GOVERNOR, GEORGIA

“

“If necessary, we should close our schools for a month or a year or two years. It would be better to do that and have free children than slave children.”⁴³⁵

Lester Maddox first entered the national spotlight in 1964 when he violated the Civil Rights Act by refusing to serve three Black patrons at his Atlanta restaurant, the Pickrick.⁴³⁶ Maddox provided his white customers with wooden pick handles, dubbed “Pickrick drumsticks,” to threaten Black people against entering his restaurant.⁴³⁷ When a federal court ordered him to integrate the restaurant, Maddox sold it. In 1966, he capitalized on his notoriety by running for governor on a segregationist “states’ rights” platform and, with the KKK’s endorsement, won.⁴³⁸ During his four years as governor, Maddox promoted a racist, segregationist agenda, vigorously opposed integrating Georgia public schools, and refused to permit Martin Luther King Jr. to lie in state after he was assassinated in 1968.⁴³⁹ In a 2001 interview, Maddox remained recalcitrant. “I want my race preserved,” he said, “and I hope most everybody else wants theirs preserved. I think forced segregation is illegal and wrong. I think forced racial integration is illegal and wrong. I believe both of them to be unconstitutional.”⁴⁴⁰ He died two years later at age 87.⁴⁴¹

(Flip Schulke/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)



ALLAN ELLENDER

(1890–1972)
U.S. SENATOR, LOUISIANA

“

“It is a sad spectacle, to say the least, and it leads one to the inevitable conclusion that up to now the Negro race has not shown itself capable of effective self-government.”⁴⁴²

A towering figure in Louisiana history, Allen Ellender was a U.S. senator from 1937 until his death in 1972. Though widely regarded as a moderate and a pragmatist who supported liberal New Deal policies, Ellender was deeply committed to racial separation and consistently supported segregationist policies.⁴⁴³ In voicing his opposition to President Harry Truman’s proposed civil rights bill, Ellender insisted that “the Negro himself cannot make progress unless he has white leadership. If you call that ‘supremacy,’ why suit yourself. But I say that the Negro race as a whole, if permitted to go to itself, will invariably go back to barbaric lunacy.”⁴⁴⁴ Ellender organized a six-day filibuster to kill an anti-lynching bill, categorically voted against all civil rights legislation,⁴⁴⁵ voted to retain the poll tax, and joined Strom Thurmond and other segregationists in signing the 1956 Southern Manifesto that criticized the 1954 *Brown* decision desegregating public schools.⁴⁴⁶ Today, several Louisiana public schools and a dorm and library at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux are named after him, and he was inducted into the Louisiana Political Museum and Hall of Fame in 1994.

(Library of Congress)



JAMES O. EASTLAND

(1904–1986)

U.S. SENATOR, MISSISSIPPI

“

“Those who would mix little children of both races in our schools are following an illegal, immoral, and sinful doctrine . . .”⁴⁴⁷

A wealthy Mississippi plantation owner and U.S. senator from 1942 to 1978, James O. Eastland was nationally known as a stalwart of Southern resistance to desegregation. In 1956, Eastland became chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, which reviewed civil rights bills and judicial nominations. Under his leadership, the committee became known as the “graveyard” for civil rights legislation.⁴⁴⁸ Civil rights bills passed during this period only if they managed to bypass Eastland’s committee.⁴⁴⁹ Eastland also opposed federally mandated desegregation by proposing a constitutional amendment that provided that “there shall be no limitations upon the power of any state to regulate health, morals, education, marriage and good order in the state.”⁴⁵⁰ Near the end of his life, when asked if he would change anything he had done as a politician, Eastland answered, “I voted my convictions on everything.”⁴⁵¹

(AP)



JOHN STENNIS

(1901–1995)

U.S. SENATOR, MISSISSIPPI

“

“We are not going to comply with the Supreme Court decision of putting whites and Blacks together, but the least we advertise that fact, the better.”⁴⁵²

John Stennis represented Mississippi in the Senate from 1947 to 1989. More restrained than his predecessor, Theodore Bilbo, Stennis carried on Bilbo’s segregationist, white supremacist agenda using the coded language of “states’ rights.” Stennis opposed anti-poll tax amendments, anti-lynching legislation, the Fair Employment Practices Committee, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968.⁴⁵³ After *Brown*, Stennis proposed maintaining segregation by improving African American schools so that integration could be rendered constitutionally unnecessary, and he urged white Mississippians to abandon public schools rather than permit their children to attend classes with Black children. Stennis was among 19 Southern senators who signed the Southern Manifesto in defiance of *Brown*.⁴⁵⁴ Many state and federal institutions in Mississippi bear his name, including a hospital in DeKalb, a federal dam near Columbus, and the John C. Stennis Institute of Government and Community Development at Mississippi State University.

(© Wally McNamee/CORBIS/Corbis via Getty Images)



(Lynn Pelham/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images)

WILLIS MCCALL

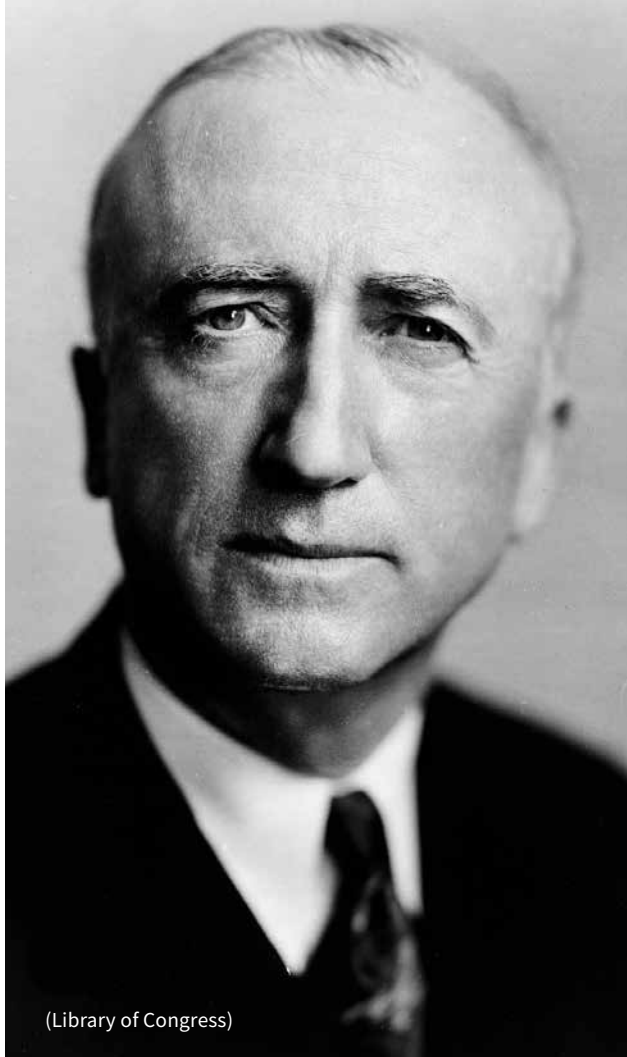
(1909–1994)

SHERIFF, LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Willis McCall, Sheriff of Lake County, Florida, from 1945 to 1972, was infamous for using violence to enforce segregation and terrorize the African American community. In 1951, in the midst of a high-profile trial of two Black men wrongly convicted of raping a white woman, McCall shot the two men while they were handcuffed and in his custody. The men, Samuel Shepherd and Walter Irving, were two of the four Groveland Boys, named for the town where the alleged rape occurred.⁴⁵⁶ Shepherd was killed but Irving survived the two gunshots to his chest and told the FBI that McCall had shot him and Shepherd in cold blood. McCall claimed self defense and was never charged.⁴⁵⁷ A staunch segregationist, McCall insisted on posting segregated bathroom signs at the Lake County Jail until the Justice Department forced their removal.⁴⁵⁸ In 1954, he enforced the Lake County School Board's decision to ban five children from a segregated school after personally deciding they were "Negro" even though their parents insisted they were white.⁴⁵⁹ McCall's reign of terror ended in 1972, when an intellectually disabled Black man was kicked to death in his jail.⁴⁶⁰ With the support of many local whites, McCall was acquitted by an all-white jury, and lost a bid for an eighth term as sheriff by a slim margin.⁴⁶¹ McCall died in 1994 at the age of 84 after writing a memoir in which he defended his commitment to segregation and the morality of his methods.⁴⁶²

“

Get those niggers out of school.⁴⁵⁵



(Library of Congress)

JAMES F. BYRNES

(1882–1972)

U.S. SENATOR, GOVERNOR, SOUTH CAROLINA
ASSOCIATE JUSTICE, U.S. SUPREME

James F. Byrnes was an influential South Carolina politician and avowed segregationist who held high-level positions in state and federal government for more than four decades. As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate for more than two decades, Byrnes personally blocked a Senate investigation of a South Carolina lynching and opposed federal anti-lynching legislation, insisting that “rape is responsible, directly and indirectly, for most of the lynching in America.”⁴⁶⁴ When Byrnes was nominated to the Supreme Court in 1941, the NAACP opposed his confirmation in a telegram to the White House: “If Senator Byrnes at any time in his long public career failed to take a position inimical to the human and citizenship rights of 13 million American Negro citizens, close scrutiny of his record fails to reveal it.”⁴⁶⁵ Byrnes was confirmed to the Court, and later held the office of Secretary of State under President Harry Truman. He remained a vocal opponent of integration throughout his term as South Carolina governor from 1951 to 1955. In his inaugural address, Byrnes proclaimed, “Whatever is necessary to continue the separation of the races in the schools of South Carolina is going to be done by the white people of the state. That is my ticket as a private citizen. It will be my ticket [as governor].”⁴⁶⁶ Since his death in 1972, Byrnes has been widely recognized; a building and a professorship at the University of South Carolina bear his name, as do Byrnes Auditorium at Winthrop University, Byrnes Hall dormitory at Clemson University, and James F. Byrnes High School in Duncan, South Carolina.

“

This is a white man’s country, and will always remain a white man’s country.⁴⁶³



HARRY BYRD

(1887–1966)

U.S. SENATOR, VIRGINIA

“

‘[The order to desegregate public schools] has brought Virginia to its greatest crisis since the war between the states.’⁴⁶⁷

Harry Byrd Sr. was a Virginia politician and segregationist who served as governor from 1926 to 1930 and as a U.S. senator from 1933 to 1965. He was well known for his vocal opposition to *Brown* and to racial integration of any kind.⁴⁶⁸ On February 25, 1956, Byrd announced an anti-integration strategy that became known as “Massive Resistance.”⁴⁶⁹ He supported a group of laws passed in 1956 to prevent integration of Virginia public schools by ending compulsory school attendance, providing vouchers to white parents to enroll their children in segregated private schools, and creating a Pupil Placement Board with the power to assign students to particular schools.⁴⁷⁰ The mainstay of Massive Resistance was a law that cut off state funds and closed any public school that attempted to integrate.⁴⁷¹ Byrd also built a coalition of nearly 100 Southern politicians who endorsed the Southern Manifesto, which declared the intent to resist racial integration “by any lawful means.”⁴⁷²

(Library of Congress)



JIM CLARK

(1922–2007)

SHERIFF, DALLAS COUNTY, ALABAMA

“

“Our niggers are gettin’ along all right. They wouldn’t be no problem if Martin Luther King and his Communists would get outta here.”⁴⁷³

In the role of Dallas County Sheriff from 1955 to 1966, James Gardner (Jim) Clark was an intransigent and violent opponent of integration and the expansion of civil rights.⁴⁷⁴ Clark described the civil rights movement as an act of “black supremacy,” and regularly wore a white button bearing the word “Never” in response to the protest anthem, *We Shall Overcome*.⁴⁷⁵ Clark dressed in military attire, wielded a .38-caliber pistol, and attacked activists with his nightstick and an electric cattle prod.⁴⁷⁶ He was often accompanied by a group of mounted volunteers armed with whips and clubs who beat and tear-gassed protestors at his command.⁴⁷⁷ On March 7, 1965, known as Bloody Sunday, Clark ordered his posse to beat hundreds of peaceful protesters attempting to march from Selma to Montgomery to demand voting rights for Black residents.⁴⁷⁸ After the 1965 Voting Rights Act enabled Dallas County’s Black residents to register to vote, Clark lost his 1966 re-election bid.⁴⁷⁹ In an interview in 2006, a year before he died at age 84, Clark said “I would do the same thing today if I had to do it all over again.”⁴⁸⁰

(Steve Schapiro/Corbis via Getty Images)



LEANDER PEREZ

(1891–1969)

JUDGE, DISTRICT ATTORNEY, LOUISIANA

“

“Don’t wait for your daughters to be raped by these Congolese. Don’t wait until the burr-heads are forced into your schools. Do something about it now.”⁴⁸¹

Descended from Spanish ancestors who settled in Louisiana, Leander Perez Sr. was a Louisiana politician of unrivaled power and influence and one of the state’s fiercest foes of African American civil rights. As a judge, district attorney for Plaquemines and St. Bernard parishes, and kingmaker in Louisiana politics,⁴⁸² Perez developed a national reputation as a leading segregationist aligned with high-profile Dixiecrats like Alabama Governor George Wallace, Georgia Governor Lester Maddox, and Mississippi Governor Ross Barnett.⁴⁸³ As the Louisiana campaign manager for the presidential campaigns of Barry Goldwater in 1964 and George Wallace in 1968, Perez helped win segregationist majorities in the parishes under his control.⁴⁸⁴ He mobilized resistance to integration by founding the 50,000-member white supremacist Citizens’ Council of Greater New Orleans, and argued that racial segregation was mandated by the Bible even after the Archdiocese of New Orleans excommunicated him for opposing integration in Catholic schools.⁴⁸⁵

(Donald Uhrbrock/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images)



ALLAN SHIVERS

(1907–1985)

GOVERNOR, TEXAS

“

Segregation in Texas will continue as long as I am governor.⁴⁸⁶

Widely known for his segregationist views, Allan Shivers served as governor of Texas from 1949 until 1957.⁴⁸⁷ Unlike more outspoken politicians, Shivers avoided outright name-calling in favor of more carefully phrased white supremacist rhetoric.⁴⁸⁸ He was a staunch advocate of “state’s rights,” which he used to rationalize his refusal to implement federal desegregation orders.⁴⁸⁹ After *Brown*, Shivers expressed his intent to defy federal orders to integrate Texas public schools and warned that racial violence would inevitably result.⁴⁹⁰ He gained national prominence in 1956 when the Mansfield school district near Fort Worth received Texas’s first desegregation order. An angry mob prevented three Black students from entering Mansfield High, and Shivers sent Texas Rangers to protect the mob and prevent the students from attending school. The Eisenhower administration, in the middle of a re-election campaign, did not intervene.⁴⁹¹ Shivers’s action inspired Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus to adopt similar tactics at Little Rock’s Central High School in 1957.⁴⁹² Throughout his political career, Shivers defended segregation and stood as a leader and supporter of white opposition to racial equality.

(1976/198-29, Courtesy of Texas State Library and Archives Commission)



(Denver Post via Getty Images)

JAMES J. KILPATRICK

(1920–2010)

JOURNALIST, WRITER, SPEAKER, VIRGINIA

A journalist and prominent voice of the white resistance to civil rights, James Kilpatrick was editor of Virginia's *Richmond News Leader* and gained national attention in the 1950s and 1960s for his ardent defense of segregation. In a series of influential editorials, Kilpatrick encouraged Southern politicians to resist the Brown decision and laid out a framework for resistance under the banner of "states' rights."⁴⁹⁴ He regularly appeared on television to represent the segregationist cause, including in a televised debate in 1960 with Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. during which Kilpatrick insisted that civil rights protestors who violate segregation laws they believe are invalid must share the moral high ground with white Southerners who resist desegregation orders they deem unjust.⁴⁹⁵ Though he often

used coded language to talk about race, Kilpatrick's beliefs were transparent. In 1963, he drafted an article titled *The Hell He is Equal* in which he argued that "the Negro race, as a race, is in fact an inferior race."⁴⁹⁶ After four Black girls were killed by a bomb that white supremacists planted in their Birmingham, Alabama, church to punish the congregation for its civil rights activism, the *Saturday Evening Post's* editor deemed Kilpatrick's article in "bad taste" and declined to publish it.⁴⁹⁷

In the 1970s, as a syndicated conservative columnist seeking to shed his reputation and attract a wider audience, Kilpatrick minimized his defense of segregation as a viewpoint he naturally adopted because he was "brought up a white boy in Oklahoma City in the 1920s and 1930s," but he never publicly renounced his white supremacist views.⁴⁹⁸

“

There are respected Negro teachers, lawyers, doctors, writers. Of course, there are. But in general terms, where is the Negro to be found? Why, sir, he is still carrying the hod. He is still digging the ditch. He is down at the gin mill shooting craps. He is lying limp in the middle of the sidewalk, yelling he is equal. The hell he is equal.⁴⁹³



Ross Barnett (AP Photo)

ROSS BARNETT

(1898–1987)

GOVERNOR, MISSISSIPPI

Ross Barnett, a prominent segregationist and governor of Mississippi from 1959 to 1964, campaigned as a defender of white supremacy and declared, “The Negro is different because God made him different to punish him.”⁵⁰⁰ Barnett used state funds to support the segregationist White Citizens’ Councils, actively sought to arrest and jail Freedom Rider activists protesting illegal discrimination, and denounced constituents who asked federal agents to investigate a lynching.⁵⁰¹ Barnett is best remembered for attempting to stop a 29-year-old Black Air Force veteran named James Meredith from enrolling at the all-white University of Mississippi after Meredith won a federal lawsuit challenging segregation at Ole Miss. In 1962, on the day U.S. Marshals were to escort

Meredith to campus, Barnett warned a segregationist crowd nearby that Ole Miss was “ready to be invaded” and issued “a call to arms.” The mob flooded the campus in violent riots that left two people dead and injured hundreds before they were quelled by federalized National Guard troops. The federal court held Barnett in contempt and imposed a large fine and jail sentence,

but these penalties were never enforced and the charges were dropped in 1965.⁵⁰² Reflecting on his role years later, Barnett said, “Generally speaking, I’d do the same things again.”⁵⁰³

“

There is no case in history where the Caucasian race has survived social integration. We will not drink from the cup of genocide.⁴⁹⁹



STROM THURMOND

(1902–2003)

U.S. SENATOR, SOUTH CAROLINA

“

“[A]ll the laws of Washington and all the bayonets of the Army cannot force the Negro into our homes, into our schools, our churches and our places of recreation and amusement.”⁵⁰⁴

Strom Thurmond was a prominent South Carolina politician and vocal segregationist. While governor of South Carolina, he led the Dixiecrat ticket in 1948 as the pro-segregationist presidential candidate; he won significant support in the South but lost the election. In 1954, Thurmond was elected to the Senate, where he grew in national influence as a leading opponent of civil rights. In 1956, he was a primary drafter of the Southern Manifesto, which denounced the Supreme Court’s 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* and encouraged Southern states to prevent public school integration.⁵⁰⁵ A staunch opponent of civil rights legislation, Thurmond famously staged a 24-hour filibuster to prevent passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1957.⁵⁰⁶ He also opposed the Voting Rights Act of 1965⁵⁰⁷ and its reauthorization in 1975.⁵⁰⁸ Thurmond served 48 years in the Senate and died in 2003 at the age of 100. He never publicly renounced his segregationist views.⁵⁰⁹

(AP)



JIM JOHNSON

(1924–2010)

STATE SENATOR, STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, ARKANSAS

“

“I don’t care how many court rulings are handed down or how many troops are sent into our state. We shall not surrender our sovereign rights and reserved powers to govern and control our state institutions.”⁵¹⁰

“Justice Jim” Johnson was an outspoken segregationist who served as an Arkansas state senator and associate justice on the Arkansas Supreme Court in the 1950s and 1960s.⁵¹¹ After the *Brown* decision, Johnson launched a campaign to ensure that defense of segregation remained a central political platform in Arkansas. Johnson formed the White Citizens’ Council of Arkansas, which protested plans to integrate schools in the town of Hoxie and proposed an amendment to the Arkansas Constitution that would authorize state officials to ignore federal law.⁵¹² (Voters passed the proposal, but it was later struck down as unconstitutional.) In 1956, Johnson challenged incumbent Orval Faubus and ran for governor on a segregationist platform with the endorsement of the KKK.⁵¹³ Although Johnson lost the election, he leveraged his supporters to pressure Faubus to embrace the segregationist cause. He was instrumental in persuading Faubus to defy federal orders to desegregate Little Rock Central High School in 1957.⁵¹⁴

(University of Arkansas Libraries, Arkansas History Commission, Jim Johnson Papers)



HERMAN TALMADGE

(1913–2002)

GOVERNOR, U.S. SENATOR, GEORGIA

“

“There aren’t enough troops in the whole United States to make the white people of this state send their children to school with colored children.”⁵¹⁵

The son of Georgia Governor Eugene Talmadge, Herman Talmadge carried on the segregationist cause after his father died. During his 1948 gubernatorial campaign, Talmadge sought to disenfranchise as many African Americans as possible and told party leaders, “If we can’t have a white primary, we want as white a one as we can get.”⁵¹⁶ As governor, Talmadge advocated for segregationist and racist policies, often framed as “states’ rights” issues, which had become a popular segregationist tactic. Talmadge appointed Klan members to public office, including Samuel Green, Grand Dragon of Georgia’s KKK, as Lieutenant Colonel and Aide-de-Camp, and Klansman Sam Rober as head of the State Bureau of Investigation. Following *Brown*, Talmadge vehemently opposed integration, ominously warning that “blood will run in the streets of Atlanta” and declaring, “We intend to maintain separate schools in Georgia one way or another, come what may.”⁵¹⁷

(Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies, University of Georgia Libraries)



JESSE HELMS

(1921–2008)

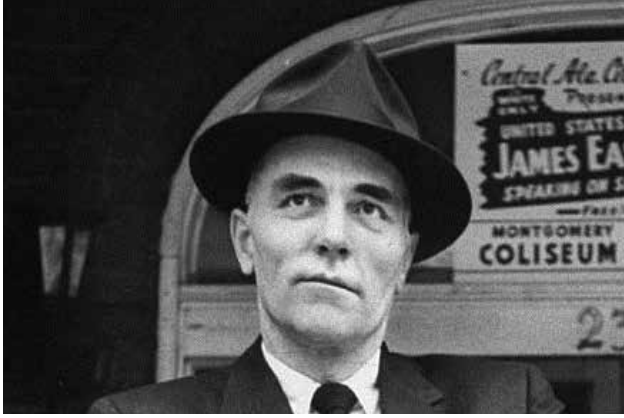
U.S. SENATOR, NORTH CAROLINA

“

“The Negro cannot count forever on the kind of restraint that’s thus far left him free to clog the streets, disrupt traffic, and interfere with other men’s rights.”⁵¹⁸

From 1973 to 2003, Jesse Helms represented North Carolina in the U.S. Senate, where he established himself as a seminal leader of the segregationist movement. Helms ran heavily racialized campaigns, vehemently opposed civil rights legislation, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and condemned civil rights activism like the 1963 March on Washington. He appealed to racist sentiment to win elections throughout his career. In 1984, Helms overcame his opponent’s 20-point lead to win re-election by filibustering a bill to make Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday a federal holiday and by distributing literature that denounced Black voter registration drives.⁵¹⁹ Helms defeated a Black opponent in 1990 after running a campaign ad that showed white hands crumpling a rejection letter as a narrator said, “You needed that job and you were the best qualified. But they had to give it to a minority because of a racial quota.”⁵²⁰

(Courtesy U.S. Senate Historical Office)



SAM ENGELHARDT

(1912–1991)

STATE SENATOR, STATE HIGHWAY DIRECTOR, ALABAMA

“

“I have worked Negroes on the plantation for years and have never had a bit of trouble with any of them. I know what is best for them... Our sole purpose is to maintain segregation. That’s what we intend to do.”⁵²¹

State Senator Sam Engelhardt was the principal architect of the Alabama Legislature’s strategy to defy desegregation, and he served as the Executive Secretary of the Citizens’ Councils of Alabama.⁵²² His home district of Macon County was 85 percent African American — the largest percentage of any county in the country — and Engelhardt was terrified by the prospect of Black voters controlling the county.⁵²³ His state senate campaign cards read, “I STAND FOR WHITE SUPREMACY SEGREGATION.”⁵²⁴ Engelhardt proposed a bill in the Alabama Senate to redraw Tuskegee’s city limits to exclude nearly all Black residents, and later suggested eliminating the majority-Black county by dividing Macon County among its neighboring counties.⁵²⁵ Engelhardt served as Alabama’s State Highway Director from 1959 to 1963, and he oversaw the construction of interstate highway projects that destroyed Black communities.⁵²⁶

(Don Cravens/The LIFE Images Collection/Getty Images)



I. BEVERLY LAKE

(1906–1996)

STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, NORTH CAROLINA

“

“If we must choose between a generation of inferior education and the amalgamation of our races into a mix-blooded whole, let us choose inferior education since that is an evil which another generation can correct, while miscegenation is a tragedy which can never be undone.”⁵²⁷

Isaac “I.” Beverly Lake was a prominent lawyer who fought school desegregation in North Carolina before joining the North Carolina Supreme Court. Lake unsuccessfully ran for governor in 1960 on a segregationist platform that publicly denounced “race-mixing.”⁵²⁸ He warned white families that integration would “destroy both their school system and their children’s pride in their racial heritage.” In 1957, Lake accused the NAACP of “trying to condition [white] children, even before they are old enough to be conscious of sex, to accept integration not only in the classroom, but in the living room and the bedroom as well.”⁵²⁹ As late as 1987, he declared it “a disgrace to have a state holiday for a man of deplorable character like Martin Luther King.”⁵³⁰ His portrait hangs in the North Carolina Supreme Court, and the North Carolina Bar Association⁵³¹ and Wake Forest and Campbell University law schools give awards in his memory.

Beverly Lake (AP Photo/News & Observer)



THOMAS PICKENS BRADY

(1903–1973)

STATE SUPREME COURT JUSTICE, MISSISSIPPI

“

“You can dress a chimpanzee, housebreak him, and teach him to use a knife and fork, but it will take countless generations of evolutionary development, if ever, before you can convince him that a caterpillar or a cockroach is not a delicacy. Likewise the social, political, economical, and religious preferences of the Negro remain close to the caterpillar and the cockroach. . . .”⁵³²

Thomas Pickens Brady became a national figure after he publicly denounced civil rights and desegregation. A circuit court judge in Brookhaven, Mississippi,⁵³³ when *Brown* was decided, he attacked it as a “stereotyped psychological opinion,” denigrated the “bestiality” of African Americans, and implored white Southerners to choose “between segregation or amalgamation”⁵³⁴ in a speech called *Black Monday* that became the intellectual foundation for segregationist White Citizens’ Councils throughout the South. Council members resisted integration through political action and targeted African Americans with violence and economic intimidation.⁵³⁵ Brady was appointed to the Mississippi Supreme Court in 1963 and served on the Democratic National Committee from 1960 to 1964, in which capacity he advocated dissolving public schools to avoid integration.⁵³⁶

(Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Southern Mississippi)



FIELDING WRIGHT

(1895–1956)

GOVERNOR, MISSISSIPPI

“

“If any of you [African Americans] have become so deluded as to want to enter our white schools, patronize our hotels and cafes, enjoy social equality with the whites, then true kindness and sympathy requires me to advise you to make your homes in some other state.”⁵³⁷

Elected on the strength of his opposition to integration and civil rights, Fielding Wright was governor of Mississippi from 1946 to 1952. To avoid the Supreme Court’s ban on whites-only primary elections, Wright called a special session of the Mississippi Legislature to pass a bill that gave party leadership discretion to approve or disapprove primary voters.⁵³⁸ In his 1948 inaugural address, Wright called for the South to break from the Democratic Party unless it opposed President Harry Truman’s civil rights program.⁵³⁹ Wright helped establish the States’ Rights Democratic Party, the “Dixiecrats,” to flex Southern segregationists’ political clout and thwart challenges to white supremacy. In 1948, he ran for vice president alongside Strom Thurmond on the Dixiecrat ticket, which won some 1.1 million votes.⁵⁴⁰ Several Mississippi institutions bear his name, including the Fielding L. Wright Art Center at Delta State University and the Fielding L. Wright Science Complex at Mississippi Valley State University.

Fielding Wright (AP Photo)

HOW SEGREGATION SURVIVED

“

You start out in 1954 by saying, “Nigger, nigger, nigger.” By 1968 you can’t say “nigger”— that hurts you, backfires. So you say stuff like, uh, forced busing, states’ rights, and all that stuff, . . .

— LEE ATWATER, ADVISOR TO PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN, IN 1981.⁵⁴¹

WHERE ??
ARE WHITE
CIVIL
RIGHTS



White children protest desegregation in Chicago, Illinois, 1966. (Declan Haun/Chicago History Museum)



Seven-year-old dressed in Ku Klux Klansman robes rides in a Klan motorcade on August 14, 1956, in Macon, Georgia. (Bettmann/Getty Images)

By the dawn of the 1970s, the Civil Rights Movement had helped push the Supreme Court to declare segregation in public schools unconstitutional and led to the passage of significant laws like the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which outlawed racial discrimination in public accommodations and employment; the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibited discriminatory voting practices; and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, which barred discrimination in housing sales, rentals, and financing.

But racial equality was not achieved by passing civil rights laws. The Civil Rights Movement did not eradicate the narrative of racial difference, and opposition to racial equality remained deeply rooted in the American way of life.



Southern lawmakers who fought to maintain segregation and white supremacy remained in positions of power, and now they were aligned with Northern, Western, and national leaders who used new language — like states’ rights and “law and order” — to maintain the age-old racial hierarchy.

The evolution of voter suppression in the South and school segregation in the North demonstrate that, while civil rights activists won the legal battle, the cause of racial inequality once again won the narrative war.

THE SURVIVAL OF SEGREGATION IN THE SOUTH

The Voting Rights Act “literally changed the face of southern politics” by bringing widespread enfranchisement to Black communities for the first time since Reconstruction.⁵⁴² Just three years after the law passed, Black voter registration in the South had increased by 1.3 million people. The greatest changes were in the states most targeted by the new law. In Mississippi, 60 percent of eligible Black voters were registered in 1968, up from just 7 percent in 1965.⁵⁴³ In Alabama, federal protection of Black voting rights directly led to the ouster of Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark; he lost in 1966 to an opponent who publicly denounced his “mass arrest” tactics.⁵⁴⁴

To stay in power as the South gained more than a million Black voters, segregationists needed to suppress the Black vote, so they began calling themselves “conservatives” and added more sophisticated tools to their repressive repertoire.

One tool was the voter fraud allegation, wielded in 1985 by then-United States Attorney Jeff Sessions against Black voting rights activists in Alabama. Sessions targeted only Black defendants, including civil rights icon Albert Turner, a former aid to Martin Luther King Jr. who was beaten in Selma on Bloody Sunday.

When critics pointed out that Sessions had targeted Black people exclusively, he insisted, “We will respond to any substantiated charge of vote fraud against whites or Blacks. I know of no charges against white election officials in my jurisdiction.” But Sessions was not responding to charges of voter fraud against the Marion Three — his office initiated the cases⁵⁴⁵ because, as Mr. Turner observed, “I stand in the way of the white power structure.”⁵⁴⁶

The “voter fraud” narrative remained a popular pretext for restricting and intimidating Black voters and their advocates.

The Marion Three were acquitted, but the “voter fraud” narrative remained a popular tactic to restrict and intimidate Black voters and their advocates.

Another tactic that became common in the 1980s is voter caging — the practice of sending mail to

addresses on the voter rolls, compiling a list of the mail that is returned undelivered, and purging voters on that list on the ground that they do not legally reside at their registered addresses.⁵⁴⁷ Proponents defended caging as a way to identify voter fraud but Republican officials targeted Black and Latino neighborhoods for voter purges. A 1981 internal Republican National Committee memo about caging in Louisiana read, “I know this race is really important to you. I would guess that this program will eliminate at least 60-80,000 folks from the rolls . . . If it’s a close race, which I’m assuming it is, this could keep the Black vote down considerably.”⁵⁴⁸ A state judge later ruled that the program’s clear intent was to remove African Americans from the voter rolls.⁵⁴⁹

Jesse Helms was elected to the Senate from North Carolina in 1973. A white Republican, he had supported I. Beverly Lake’s segregationist campaign for governor in 1960, and actively relied on voter caging⁵⁵⁰ and other racialized tactics.

In 1984, Helms overcame a 20-point deficit after he published literature warning voters about Black registration drives and filibustered the bill that sought to make Martin Luther King Jr.’s birthday a national holiday.⁵⁵¹ In the twilight of his tenure, while Helms was a guest on the *Larry King Live* show, a caller thanked him for “everything you’ve done to help keep down the niggers.”⁵⁵² Helms retired in 2003 at age 81.⁵⁵³



In 2010, Alabama’s Republican-controlled state government filed a lawsuit challenging the Voting Rights Act as “no longer necessary.”⁵⁵⁴ Three years later, in *Shelby County v. Holder*, a divided Supreme Court effectively gutted the Voting Rights Act by striking down the requirement that states like Alabama obtain “pre-clearance” from the federal government before changing their voting laws.⁵⁵⁵ In dissent, Associate Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote that the Court was turning its back to history. “The sad irony of today’s decision lies in its utter failure to grasp why the [Voting Rights Act] has proven effective,” she wrote.

“

Throwing out preclearance when it has worked and is continuing to work to stop discriminatory changes is like throwing away your umbrella in a rainstorm because you are not getting wet.⁵⁵⁶

In this 1965 photograph, a man in Alabama holds a large sign protesting the Civil Rights Act. Others hold Confederate flags, which became a symbol of resistance to desegregation. (© Spider Martin)



A young man peeks from behind a door at a Black Panther Party meeting space in Chicago on August 5, 1969, days after police blasted the building with gunfire. Party leader Fred Hampton was killed by Chicago police just months later. (Bettmann/Getty Images)

THE GOVERNMENT ASSAULT ON BLACK POWER

In the pre-dawn hours of December 4, 1969, Chicago police working with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) raided the Black Panther Party's local headquarters.⁵⁵⁷ Fred Hampton's personal bodyguard, William O'Neal, was an FBI informant and gave officers a floor plan before the raid.⁵⁵⁸ When the smoke cleared, Hampton and Mark Clark were dead and four others had been seriously wounded.⁵⁵⁹

During the civil rights era, law enforcement targeted Black leaders for arrest, surveillance, propaganda, and violence. Leaders of bus boycotts in

Montgomery, Alabama, and Tallahassee, Florida, in 1956, were harassed, arrested, and fined.⁵⁶⁰ That year, the FBI launched COINTELPRO, a counterintelligence program focused on “domestic threats,” including civil rights activists.⁵⁶¹

Black leaders committed to racial justice represented a threat to white supremacy and became targets of law enforcement harassment and attack even when they advocated nonviolence. Beginning in 1963, for example, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. “was the target of an intensive campaign by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to ‘neutralize’ him as an effective civil rights leader” and destroy his image as a “potential messiah” to unify Black activists.⁵⁶²

When a younger generation began to steer the movement in a different direction, law enforcement repression intensified.⁵⁶³ Malcolm X, who believed “[i]t is criminal to teach a man not to defend himself when he is the constant victim of brutal attacks,”⁵⁶⁴ was constantly surveilled by police up until he was assassinated in 1965.⁵⁶⁵

In July 1966, 25-year-old SNCC chairman Stokely Carmichael gave a speech invoking Malcolm X’s memory and advocating a self-determination policy of “Black Power.”⁵⁶⁶

A few months later, two Black men named Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale formed the Black Panther Party for Self Defense in Oakland, California.⁵⁶⁷ Spurning the tactics of marches, sit-ins, and boycotts, the Panthers founded youth centers and free breakfast programs and organized legally armed patrols to prevent police brutality.⁵⁶⁸ President Lyndon B. Johnson publicly condemned the concept of “Black Power” that the Panthers symbolized.⁵⁶⁹

The rise of militant Black activism and its rejection by white stakeholders emboldened law enforcement officials to employ controversial — and sometimes deadly — tactics. In August 1967, the FBI officially directed COINTELPRO to “expose, disrupt, misdirect, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” Black nationalist groups.⁵⁷⁰ In July 1969, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover named the Black Panther Party “the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.”⁵⁷¹

Federal agents and local police engaged in harassment and raids that led to violent shootouts and the deadly ambush that killed 21-year-old Fred Hampton. An April 1970 poll, however, showed that 75 percent of Americans blamed the Panthers for this police violence.⁵⁷²

“[M]any of the tactics employed by the FBI were indisputably degrading to a free society,” a Senate committee concluded in 1976, five years after COINTELPRO shut down.⁵⁷³ The committee reported:

During 1967–1971, FBI headquarters approved 379 proposals for COINTELPRO actions against ‘Black nationalists.’ These operations utilized dangerous and unsavory techniques which gave rise to the risk of death and often disregarded the personal rights and dignity of the victims.⁵⁷⁴



Young girls in Los Angeles play in front of a wall marked with a hateful epithet. (© Joe Schwartz; www.joeschwartzphoto.com)

THE EVOLUTION OF SEGREGATION IN THE NORTH

Outside the South, residential segregation was a driving force of school segregation before and after the civil rights era. In 1970, average residential segregation in Northern and Western population centers was even higher than in the South — more than four out of five Black residents lived in segregated neighborhoods.⁵⁷⁵

Residential segregation was “manufactured by whites through a series of self-conscious actions and purposeful institutional arrange-

ments.”⁵⁷⁶ After the Fair Housing Act of 1968 barred white homeowners from explicitly refusing to rent or sell to Black people, “[r]ealtors no longer refused outright to rent or sell to Blacks . . . but real estate agents continued to practice surreptitious and widespread discrimination,” such as excluding listings from predominately Black newspapers and lying to Black home seekers about the availability of apartments.⁵⁷⁷

Audits revealed such rampant housing discrimination in St. Louis in 1969 that four realty companies were forced to sign a consent decree with the Department of Justice. In Palo Alto, California, a 1971 study found that Black people experi-

enced discrimination in 50 percent of apartment complexes, while a 1976 investigation in suburban Baltimore uncovered discrimination in more than 45 percent of cases.⁵⁷⁸ Home ownership was no solution, as banks often rejected mortgage applications from qualified Black buyers.⁵⁷⁹ These practices made it difficult for Black families to move into white neighborhoods, which in turn made it difficult to meaningfully integrate schools.

To implement *Brown* during the 1970s, courts ordered the transportation of Black and white students to public schools outside of their neighborhoods. In 1971, the Supreme Court upheld courts’ authority to order busing⁵⁸⁰ and many school

districts implemented busing plans in the 1970s and 1980s. In response, white families across the country organized opposition to “forced busing” that mirrored Southern opposition to school desegregation.

“I favor segregation,” Orville Hubbard, mayor of Dearborn, Michigan, explained to the *New York Times* in 1968. “Because if you have integration, first you have kids going to school together, then next thing you know, they’re grab-assing around, then they’re getting married and having half-breed kids. Then you wind up with a mongrel race. And from what I know of history, that’s the end of civilization.”⁵⁸¹ Hubbard’s supporters kept him in office from 1942 to 1978.⁵⁸²

In Boston in 1974, school committee chairman, John Kerrigan, voted to defy the order and develop no plan. “This is a vote against those maggots that live outside the city,” he announced. “And it’s the proudest vote I’ve cast in seven years on this committee.”

New York Governor Norman Rockefeller signed a bill to outlaw busing in 1969, but the law was later deemed unconstitutional.⁵⁸³ In Boston in 1974, after a federal court ordered the local school committee

to propose a desegregation plan, the committee chairman, John Kerrigan, voted to defy the order and develop no plan. “This is a vote against those maggots that live outside the city,” he announced. “And it’s the proudest vote I’ve cast in seven years on this committee.”⁵⁸⁴

That September, after court-ordered busing began in Boston, white mothers led the opposition.⁵⁸⁵ White mobs attacked buses carrying Black students to white schools with eggs, bricks, and bottles. Protestors, students, and bystanders alike were stoned, stabbed, and beaten in clashes that continued for weeks until quelled by the National Guard.⁵⁸⁶

Northern segregation activists distinguished themselves from “unsophisticated racist Southerners” by focusing on their identities as mothers concerned about school safety, quality, and cohesiveness.⁵⁸⁷ In Michigan, anti-busing crusader Irene McCabe declared, “We are not racists. We respect the Blacks. Our concern is with education.”⁵⁸⁸ Louise Day-Hicks, former Boston mayoral candidate and founder of the anti-busing group Restore Our Alienated Rights (ROAR), staunchly opposed busing but avoided public racism: “I am not a racist. You show me where I have said anything against . . . Negroes.”⁵⁸⁹



A grade school student draws on a chalkboard in a one-room schoolhouse in Selma, Alabama, in March 1965. A decade after Brown, schools continued to be separate and unequal. (Bruce Davidson/Magnum Photos)

But the racial motivations were barely obscured just below the surface. “White motherhood meant teaching their children lessons in racial distance, in a racially determined place in society, and in white superiority,” wrote historian Elizabeth Gillespie McRae. “Whiteness had so infused definitions of motherhood in the Jim Crow South and a Jim Crow nation that they could hardly be separated.”⁵⁹⁰

Mass organizing against busing forced school boards across the country to demand that courts lift or weaken busing mandates. As early as 1977, federal courts agreed to lift a busing order imposed on Oklahoma City schools just five years earlier after concluding that integration had been achieved.⁵⁹¹ Boston’s desegregation plan was ruled successful in 1987.⁵⁹²



A sign mounted in February 1942, directly across from the Sojourner Truth Homes, a federal housing project in Detroit, Michigan. White residents rioted when their Black neighbors attempted to move in. (Library of Congress)

On July 17, 2001, Harvard University’s Civil Rights Project published a study reporting that school districts across the nation — particularly in the South — were re-segregating at an alarming rate.

Residential segregation remained so persistent that sociologists observed, “No group in the history of the United States has ever experienced the sustained high level of residential segregation that has been imposed on Blacks in large American cities for the past fifty years.”⁵⁹³

On January 15, 1991, the Supreme Court nonetheless declared that federal school desegregation injunctions were intended to be temporary and made it easier for schools to end busing and other desegregation policies.⁵⁹⁴

A decade later, researchers found that, due to relaxed court oversight, school districts across the nation — particularly in the South — were re-segregating at an alarming rate.⁵⁹⁵ The study reported that more than 70 percent of African American students attended predominately minority schools in the 1998–1999 school year — *more* than in the 1972–1973 school year.⁵⁹⁶

Between 2000 and 2014, the number of schools classified by the United



States Government Accountability Office as “high poverty and comprised mostly of Black or Hispanic students” more than doubled, from 7,009 to 15,089.⁵⁹⁷ Today, across the country, schools with at least 90 percent non-white students spend \$733 less per student than schools that are 90 percent white.⁵⁹⁸ Exacerbating the inequality, tracking policies funnel white students into magnet pro-



Pro-segregation march in Montgomery, Alabama, on March 17, 1965. (Glen Percy Collection, American Folklife Center, Library of Congress)

grams and advanced courses;⁵⁹⁹ as a New Jersey parent observed, “You can . . . look in a classroom and know whether it’s an upper-level class or a lower-level class based on the racial composition of the classroom.”⁶⁰⁰

School segregation remains most deeply entrenched in the South. In Georgia, students at “integrated” Turner County High School

attended private, segregated proms — one for Black students and one for white students — until 2007, and Wilcox County High School did not hold its first integrated prom until 2013.⁶⁰¹

Alabama’s constitution still mandates separate schools for white and Black children because voters rejected repeal attempts in 2004 and

2012.⁶⁰² Alabama schools remain deeply separate and unequal: 90 percent of students attending Alabama’s 75 failing schools in 2018 were African American.⁶⁰³

THE INEQUALITY THAT REMAINS

The undeniable impact of valiant civil rights leaders and the many people who joined marches, boycotts, sit-ins, picket lines, voter registration drives, and freedom rides is reflected in the opportunities and achievements that people of color have accumulated since the Civil Rights Movement.

At the same time, collective action in opposition to civil rights — from rallies and town meetings to bombings and riots — strengthened the bedrock narrative of white suprem-

acy upon which the architects of civil rights opposition constructed the modern apartheid state.

Months before infamous segregationist James O. Eastland died in 1986 in his native Sunflower County, Mississippi, amid the wind-whispered memories of a brutal lynching, he expressed no regret. “I voted my convictions on everything.”⁶⁰⁴

Because our nation failed to confront the narrative of racial difference in the decades after the as-



A large crowd gathers in South Boston to protest federal busing orders on September 12, 1974. Visible among the crowd because of their trademark white hats is the South Boston Information Center, a white militant anti-busing organization. (Spencer Grant/Getty)

sassinations of national civil rights leaders and the rise of politicians opposed to civil rights signaled the end of the Civil Rights Movement, white opposition rebranded itself while racial inequality grew.

In 2016, the rate of African American unemployment (8.4 percent) was nearly double the rate for white Americans (4.3 percent).⁶⁰⁵ A 2017 study concluded that “discrimination against Black job applicants hasn’t changed since the 1990s.”⁶⁰⁶ In part due to high rates of joblessness, 22 percent of African Americans live in poverty, compared to 9 percent of white Americans.⁶⁰⁷ The racial wealth gap nearly tripled between 1984 and 2009, and today, for every \$100 of wealth held by a white family, a Black family has just \$5.04.⁶⁰⁸

For a fleeting moment, racial justice challenged the American conscience and became a critical issue for this nation. But a generation later, racial injustice was again a burden that Black communities bore in resegregated isolation, while many white Americans actively defended the status quo or avoided serious engagement with racial issues entirely.

The number of white adults reporting “no interest” in the issue of employment discrimination against Black Americans rose from 13 percent in 1964 to 34 percent in 2000.⁶⁰⁹ “[T]he expression of racial apathy in the post-civil rights era is one new way in which white Americans can deny having negative feelings toward racial minori-



Billboard posted on an Alabama highway in 2014. (Bernard Troncale)

ties while indirectly supporting the racial status quo.”⁶¹⁰

38 percent of white Americans agreed that the nation has already made the changes necessary to achieve equal rights while only 8 percent of Black Americans said the same.

More recently, a 2016 Pew Research Center poll reported wide gulfs in views on race relations: 38 percent of white Americans agreed that the nation has already made the changes necessary to achieve equal rights while only 8 percent of Black Americans said the same.⁶¹¹

In the same study, 41 percent of white respondents said too much attention is paid to race these days, and just 19 percent of white respondents (in contrast with 70 percent of Black respondents) agreed that institutional discrimination is a bigger problem than individual prejudice.⁶¹²

“Perhaps I was too optimistic,” Dr. King wrote in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, five years before he was assassinated on a Memphis hotel balcony. “Perhaps I expected too much. I suppose I should have realized that few members of the oppressor race can understand the deep groans and passionate yearnings of the oppressed race, and still fewer have the vision to see that injustice must be rooted out by strong, persistent and determined action.”⁶¹³

CONFEDERATE ICONOGRAPHY IN THE 20TH CENTURY



On June 4, 1917, the Daughters of the Confederacy unveil the "Southern Cross" monument in Arlington, Virginia. (Bettmann/Getty Images)

THE RISE OF CONFEDERATE MONUMENTS



Members of the Ku Klux Klan burn a large cross atop Stone Mountain in DeKalb County, Georgia, on July 23, 1948, while initiating 700 new members. (AP Photo, File)

Much of the Southern — and then national — retelling of the history of the Civil War and the Confederacy took place through monuments and the organizations that formed to erect them. Around the turn of the 20th century, white Southerners installed monuments to the Confederacy across the South as part of a concerted effort to redeem their defeat and build cultural support for the re-establishment of white supremacy.⁶¹⁴

Former President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis, and others, sought to promote a new, “Lost Cause” narrative about the 19th century.⁶¹⁵ Lost Cause supporters argued that the Civil War was not about slavery, but was instead a fight between an industrializing North and a romanticized South.⁶¹⁶ As Davis told it, the North attempted to exercise “unlimited, despotic power” over sovereign Southern states, and Reconstruction extended that federal conquest.⁶¹⁷ This narrative minimized the Confederacy’s military defeat and instead celebrated the South’s triumph over Reconstruction, including the withdrawal of federal troops and restoration of the racial hierarchy. As Edward Pollard, a leading campaigner for the movement, wrote in *The Lost Cause*: “To the extent of securing the supremacy of the white man, [the South] really triumphs in the true cause of the war.”⁶¹⁸

The evolution and promotion of the Lost Cause narrative can be seen in Confederate monuments. The first, installed in cemeteries in the 1860s to memorialize fallen soldiers, typically were modest structures that reflected a sentiment of personal mourning.⁶¹⁹

In the decades that followed, organizations like the United Daughters of the Confederacy, which had 100,000 members by the start of World War I, and the Sons of Confederate Veterans began to install Confederate monuments in locations with far more polit-

ical significance, such as courthouse lawns and town squares. These groups nonetheless maintained publicly that they were motivated by an apolitical desire to honor their ancestors.⁶²⁰

These new monuments romanticized and glorified the effort to preserve slavery by framing Southern secession as an effort to defend local autonomy and states’ rights. During this era of racial terrorism, disenfranchisement, and violent repression targeting African Americans, Confederate monuments, memorials, and other symbols played a vital role in restoring the racial hierarchy that would continue to dominate life in the American South and influence thinking on racial equality nationwide.

Confederate monuments often received political endorsements from outside the South, including from the federal government. The North’s appeasement of white Southerners included actively funding the creation of a cultural landscape designed to perpetuate white supremacy and the racial subordination of Black people. At a 1927 dedication ceremony for a federally-funded statue of Jefferson Davis in Mississippi, Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi proclaimed that the Confederacy did not fight to preserve slavery, but to preserve “[t]he cause of White Racial Supremacy, which . . . is not a ‘Lost Cause.’ It is a Cause Triumphant. It was never as safe as now since the Missouri Compromise . . . The white man’s family, life, his code of social ethics, his racial integrity — in a word his civilization — the destruction of which in the slave states was dreaded . . . are safe.”⁶²¹

By 1950, at least 1000 Confederate monuments stood throughout the South, including more than 300 installed on the grounds of a courthouse. Every Southern state capitol building had at least one monument to the Confederacy.⁶²²

CONFEDERATE ICONOGRAPHY IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS ERA

Confederate symbols and monuments gained prominence as African Americans began demanding civil rights and equal treatment in the mid-20th century. The Dixiecrats used Confederate symbols to brand themselves as champions of the struggle for states' rights, and under this guise, they resisted growing calls for racial equality.⁶²³

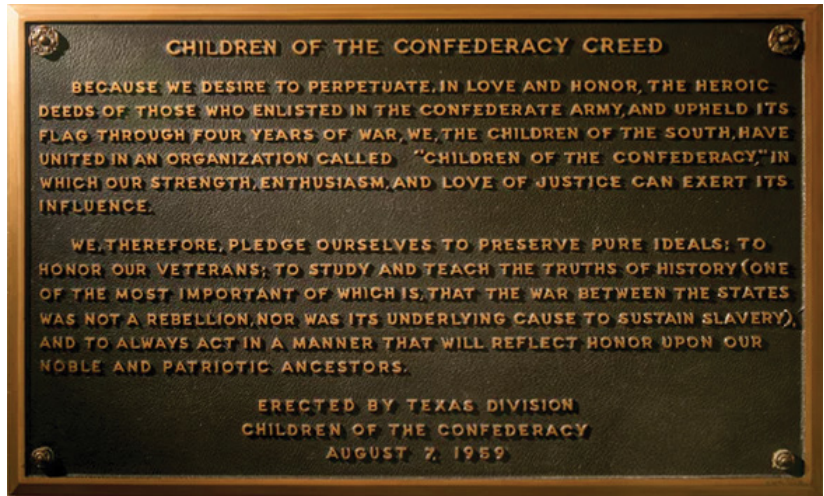
Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, scores of new Confederate monuments were added to the Southern landscape, many in direct response to federal desegregation efforts. In 1955, one year after the Supreme Court struck down segregated public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Alabama opened a new all-white high school named for Robert E. Lee and later placed a bronze figure of Lee at its entrance. A few months later, as part of its opposition to *Brown*, Georgia redesigned its state flag to include the Confederate battle flag. Standing in front of his state's new flag, Governor Marvin Griffin declared that federal desegregation laws were "imperial[ing] the mores of the South."⁶²⁴

In the 1960s, in reaction to the passage of the Civil Rights Act and Voting Rights Act, Texas installed 27 Confederate monuments dedicated to Confederate soldiers who had fought against "the federal enemy." In 1964 alone, an additional 16 monuments were dedicated across the South. That same year, Florida joined Georgia and South Carolina in flying the Confederate battle flag on its courthouse lawns.⁶²⁵ The flags augmented a landscape littered with the iconography of white supremacy and racial inequality.

The Confederate battle flag also became a staple at white segregationist protests and rallies. Segregationists displayed Confederate flags when African Americans attempted to integrate schools and order at segregated lunch counters, and white residents hung Confederate flags along the route of the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery.⁶²⁶ White children followed this example: in June 1966, when Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. led a civil rights march along U.S. 51 near Como, Mississippi, a white boy played Dixie on his clarinet while a young white girl stood beside him waving a Confederate flag.⁶²⁷

Confederate iconography continued to gain traction outside the South. The year after *Brown*, Robert E. Lee Elementary School was founded in East Wenatchee, Washington. Confederate monuments were installed as far north as Maine and as far west as Oregon. Brooklyn, New York, still maintains General Lee Avenue and Stonewall Jackson Drive. In 2009, early in President Barack Obama's first term, a South Dakota police department created an official badge featuring the Confederate flag.

Today, the South is fighting to preserve thousands of Confederate monuments. In recent years, Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia passed "heritage" laws to protect Confederate monuments⁶²⁸ in light of increasing public pressure to remove them.⁶²⁹ In 2017, Alabama Governor Kay Ivey signed a memorial preservation law that forbids "the relocation, removal, alteration, renaming, or disturbance of any architecturally significant building, memorial building, memorial street, or monument on public property which has been in place for 40 years or more."⁶³⁰ The Attorney General used the law to block the City of Birmingham from removing a prominent Confederate monument from a city park; today, the monument remains in place, covered in plywood.



A 2017 photograph shows the Children of the Confederacy Creed plaque that was installed at the Capitol in Austin, Texas, in 1959, during the heart of the Civil Rights Movement. (Jay Janner/Austin American-Statesman via AP)



Klan members hold a press conference in front of the Nathan Bedford Forrest bust at the capitol in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1980 to discuss training SWAT teams in preparation for the "race war." (Tennessean via Newspapers.com)

THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

In an effort to better understand the scope and depth of the South's commitment to Confederate iconography, EJI has worked to identify and locate Confederate monuments across America. We have documented more than 1575 Confederate monuments total, the vast majority of which were put up after 1910. 1568 Confederate monuments are located across the 12 Southern states at their original locations in town squares, on courthouse lawns, and at each and every state capitol. Hundreds of additional Confederate symbols and school and street names dominate this region as well.

Alabama

There are more than 100 Confederate monuments in Alabama. The placement of these monuments reflects deep government support for Confederate memorialization. Four Confederate monuments stand on the grounds of the state capitol building, and monuments appear on the grounds of at least five schools in Alabama, including at the center of campus at the University of Alabama. More than a third of county courthouses in the state have Confederate monuments. The Bibb County courthouse monument, erected in 1920, bears an inscription proclaiming, "No nation rose so white and fair, or fell so pure of grime" as the Confederate States of America. About 25 percent of the state's courthouse monuments were erected within the last 30 years.



This monument celebrating Nathan Bedford Forrest was unveiled in Selma, Alabama, in 2015. Forrest was a Confederate Army General and an early leader of the Ku Klux Klan (AP Photo/Alvin Benn, Montgomery Advertiser)

Arkansas

There are now nearly 50 Confederate monuments in Arkansas, including 12 in Pulaski County, where Little Rock is located. The state capitol building in Little Rock has three Confederate monuments on its grounds, and its previous location features four Confederate monuments. The United Daughters of the Confederacy was particularly active in Arkansas, sponsoring nearly 70 percent of Confederate monuments in the state.

Florida

Florida has at least 57 monuments honoring the Confederacy spread throughout half of its counties. No less than seven counties have monuments on their courthouse lawns, and at least 10 additional monuments are prominently displayed in Florida towns. As in many other Southern states, the most active sponsors of Confederate monuments in Florida are the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans, which recently created a “Flags Across Florida” project to install large Confederate flags in locations visible from well-traveled roadways. To date, the project has completed at least three installations, including an oversized Confederate flag on a 139-foot pole accompanied by a large semicircle of stone monuments celebrating the “timeless” nature of the Confederate cause.

Georgia

Georgia is home to more than 160 monuments honoring the Confederacy. More than 90 of the state’s 159 counties have at least one Confederate monument, and more than nearly 50 counties have one on their courthouse lawns. No fewer than four Confederate monuments decorate the grounds of Georgia’s capitol building, including one prominent monument to John Gordon, a Confederate general and senator who staunchly opposed Reconstruction and reputedly led Georgia’s Klu Klux Klan. The capitol also features a monument to Joseph Brown, the governor who led Georgia’s secession in 1861.

The largest Confederate monument in the United States is Georgia’s Stone Mountain. Known as the site

of the first gathering of the “Second” Ku Klux Klan in 1915, Stone Mountain was given to the United Daughters of the Confederacy in 1916. The landowners, the Venable brothers, requested that the organization design a Confederate monument at the mountain’s scale, and granted a “perpetual easement” to the KKK to continue to access the site for gatherings. In 1960, the state purchased the site and completed the long-delayed construction of the monument, which opened in 1972. The elaborate and massive tribute to the Confederacy remains open today.

Kentucky

The more than 50 Confederate monuments in Kentucky are mostly in cemeteries, but at least 10 counties have Confederate monuments on their courthouse lawns. Kentucky celebrates its connection to Jefferson Davis, who was born in the state, with a marble sculpture in its capitol building inscribed “Patriot — Hero — Statesman.” A state park commemorating Davis’s birthplace includes a 351-foot monument to Davis modeled after the Washington Monument.

Louisiana

More than half of Louisiana’s 65 Confederate monuments were installed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. The capitol grounds contain at least three Confederate markers, and at least 12 parish courthouses feature Confederate monuments. The front entrance to the Supreme Court of Louisiana boasts a monument to Justice E.D. White, who fought in the Confederate Army before he joined the United States Supreme Court and voted with the majority to uphold segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. A “Good Darky” or “Uncle Jack” monument stands in the Louisiana State University Rural Life Museum in Baton Rouge. The statue, erected by a white businessman in 1927 and moved to the museum in 1974, depicts a supplicating African American man and an original placard that reads: “Dedicated to the arduous and faithful services of the good darkies of Louisiana.”

Mississippi

Mississippi has at least 175 monuments honoring the Confederacy, at least 26 of which are installed on courthouse lawns. Fifteen towns prominently display Confederate monuments in their civic landscapes. Many of Mississippi's Confederate monuments were installed with the support of the federal government as part of the Vicksburg National Military Park. One of the park's most prominent monuments is a statue of Jefferson Davis that the State of Mississippi gave to the federal government to install on the site. During the 1927 unveiling ceremony attended by state and federal officials, Senator John Sharp Williams dedicated the monument to "[t]he cause of White Racial Supremacy."

North Carolina

North Carolina has at least 190 Confederate monuments in more than 80 of its 100 counties. At least 50 counties have Confederate monuments on their courthouse lawns, and there are at least four monuments on the grounds of the state capitol. Many of North Carolina's Confederate monuments have been placed in locations explicitly associated with voting, including in front of community centers and other polling places. In Gatesville, North Carolina, a tall Confederate monument installed in 1915 was placed directly in front of the County Board of Elections building.

South Carolina

South Carolina has at least 92 monuments honoring the Confederacy, and more than 80 percent of its counties have at least one monument. The state capitol in Columbia has seven different monuments to the Confederacy, and three other major public parks in the city — Marion Square, Washington Square Park, and White Point Gardens — have highly visible Confederate monuments at their centers. Marion Square Park houses a massive monument to white supremacist John C. Calhoun, just a half block from the Mother Emmanuel AME Church, site of the racially-motivated murders of nine African American parishioners in 2015.

Tennessee

At least 30 of Tennessee's more than 100 Confederate monuments were installed after 1976. As in other states, the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans have been the most active in promoting Confederate memorials, and the two groups are responsible for more than 60 of the state's monuments. In 1978, the Sons of Confederate Veterans installed a bust of Confederate general and early organizer of the Ku Klux Klan, Nathan Bedford Forrest, in the central corridor of Tennessee's state house. The State of Tennessee has resisted recent efforts to move the bust, and in 2017, the Tennessee Capitol Commission refused to allow it to be relocated to the Tennessee State Museum. Just south of the capitol, a 25-foot, full-color fiberglass statue of Forrest on horseback sits on private land within view of a major interstate highway; when Nashville city leaders asked the Tennessee Department of Transportation to assist in obscuring the controversial monument by planting trees or shrubbery on the public roadside, the agency refused.

Texas

At least 137 monuments honoring the Confederacy are spread out across 86 Texas counties. Unique in the extent to which it has sponsored monuments to the Confederacy, Texas has installed at least 34 Confederate monuments, including 27 erected between 1963 and 1965, during the heart of the Civil Rights Movement. Since 1959, the state capitol building has housed a placard featuring the "Children of the Confederacy Creed," which vows to "preserve pure ideals [and] study and teach the truths of history (one of the most important of which, is that the War Between the States was not a rebellion, nor was its underlying cause to sustain slavery)."

Virginia

Home to Richmond, the last capitol of the Confederacy, Virginia has the most Confederate monuments in the country. About 75 of Virginia's 376 monuments are placed on courthouse lawns, and the state capitol building in Richmond is home to three Confederate



The Alabama Division of the Sons of Confederate Veterans installed a Confederate flag on a 100-foot-tall pole along Interstate 65 in Verbena, Alabama, in 2005, and it is still flying today. (Mickey Welsh/Bloomberg via Getty Images)

monuments — including a tall likeness of Stonewall Jackson. Most dramatic is Richmond’s “Monument Avenue,” an immaculately groomed roadway displaying five massive monuments dedicated to Confederate leaders. Several Virginia universities embrace their ties to the Confederacy: Washington and Lee University maintains Lee Chapel, where Robert E. Lee is interred below a large marble sculpture of the Confederate general in uniform that stands in place of

an altar. At the Virginia Military Institute, a bronze monument to Stonewall Jackson looms over the parade grounds at the heart of campus. Virginia’s monuments were brought into the national spotlight in 2017 when a peaceful counterprotestor was violently killed as white supremacists rallied in Charlottesville to “defend” a statue of Robert E. Lee that had been slated for removal.

NOTES

FROM SLAVERY TO SEGREGATION

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The power of white segregationists at the end of the war meant that a breakthrough civil rights movement seemed far from inevitable, [and] provided a reminder, if one was needed, that any future Black activism or federal interference could expect massive resistance.

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Personally, the writer of this book would rather see his race and his civilization blotted out with the atomic bomb than to see it slowly but surely destroyed in the maelstrom of miscegenation, interbreeding, intermarriage and mongrelization. The destruction in either case would be inevitable – one in a flash and the other by the slow but certain process of sin, degradation, and mongrelization.

It is not too late – we can yet save the integrity and civilization of both the white and the Black races. Many great men of the past have suggested the only solution – the only salvation. A physical separation as advocated from the days of Thomas Jefferson to the present is the only solution. To do this may be a Herculean task, but it is not impossible.

On the pages of this book the author has tried to give you the indisputable truth, expose forces and influences that seek the amalgamation of our races and has pointed out the only proper solution to America’s greatest domestic problem. May God in His infinite wisdom and mercy direct us and lead us into the ways of our only salvation.

57 *Ibid.*, chapters I and XIII.

58 *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, 60 U.S. 393, 407 (1857).

59 *Prigg v. Pennsylvania*, 41 U.S. 539, 612 (1842).

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61 *Ibid.*

62 *Ibid.*, 408, 423.

63 *The Slaughter-House Cases*, 83 U.S. 36 (1873).

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71 *Williams v. Mississippi*, 170 U.S. 213, 225 (1898). The Supreme Court acknowledged that the Mississippi Supreme Court had found that the constitutional convention had intended to “obstruct the exercise of suffrage” by African Americans. As the Mississippi court explained:

By reason of its previous condition of servitude and dependencies, this race had acquired or accentuated certain peculiarities of habit, of temperament, and of character, which clearly distinguished it as a race from the whites; a patient, docile people, but careless, landless, migratory within narrow limits, without forethought, and its criminal members given to furtive offenses, rather than the robust crimes of the whites. Restrained by the federal constitution from discriminating against the negro race, the convention discriminates against its characteristics, and the offenses to which its criminal members are prone.

Ibid., 222 (quoting *Ratcliff v. Beal*, 20 So. 865, 868 (1896)).

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74 *Ibid.*, 487–88.

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