



Black men collecting cotton in the rural agricultural post-slavery South.

PROGRAM ONE:

## Promises Betrayed (1865–1896)

**F**ROM THE DAYS OF SLAVERY THROUGH THE JIM Crow years, African Americans were passionate about education. Many men and women learned to read despite the risks involved. A slave caught reading could be whipped or branded. A freedman caught teaching other blacks could be re-enslaved or killed. After the Civil War, former abolitionists who came south to open schools found many freedmen and women defiantly building and maintaining their own schools.

uated from Fisk.

In the 1880s, when Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee Institute, whites supported his efforts because they thought the school would accommodate white supremacy by training its students for labor. Yet, for many young people, Tuskegee was a godsend. After receiving a Tuskegee education, William Holtzclaw founded Utica College in Mississippi.

While some schools offered vocational education to get much needed white financial support, others “trained minds instead of hands.” Lucy Laney, Charlotte Hawkins Brown and other teachers saw education as a means of “uplifting the race.” Modeled on New England Colleges, Fisk and Atlanta taught their students academic subjects, aiming to produce “race leaders, not followers.” W.E.B. Du Bois declared that the mission of quality schools was to train the “Talented Tenth,” the ten percent of the black community that would lead the rest out of the snare of Jim Crow and into freedom. He was right. Many of the leaders and soldiers of the Civil Rights movement were students from black colleges. ■

*Essay by Richard Wormser, the producer and episode writer/director of The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow.*



Children hard at work in the schoolhouse.

### Program Summary

*Following the Civil War, whites denied African Americans their dreams of owning land and obtaining their political and civil rights. Whites subjected blacks to disfranchisement and segregation enforced by law, as well as lynchings, beatings and burnings. African Americans responded by creating opportunities for themselves — politically, economically and educationally. Booker T. Washington founded Tuskegee Institute; Ida B. Wells confronted segregation in Tennessee; and Isaiah Montgomery built the successful all-black town of Mount Bayou in Mississippi. In 1896, the Supreme Court, in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson, upheld the pernicious doctrine of “separate but equal.”*

When the Jim Crow era began in the 1880s, Southern whites adamantly opposed anything but minimal education for black children. White planters felt that education spoiled “good field hands.” Urban whites felt that education made blacks “too uppity.” By the end of the 19th century, almost two-thirds of black children could not attend school because they had neither school buildings nor teachers. Whites often burned down black schools and killed or drove teachers out of the community. In spite of all this blacks were not deterred.

The black community supported their own schools; and local churches often provided education through Sabbath schools. Over 70 percent of all

black children in school attended private schools. Whenever blacks could influence state legislators, they asked that all children have access to public schools. Missionary societies from the North founded black colleges and training schools, such as Fisk, Atlanta University and Hampton, which produced future black leaders. Booker T. Washington attended Hampton in the 1870s. A decade later, W.E.B. Du Bois grad-

# “She would hide me behind skillets, ovens and pots. Then she would slip me to school the back way...”

**N**ed Cobb, a tenant farmer in Alabama, grew up during the height of Jim Crow. He recounted his life story to Theodore Rosengarten, whose book, *All God's Dangers*, won the National Book Award: “My children weren’t going to school worth nothing then. It weren’t their fault, they wanted to go and it weren’t my fault. I wouldn’t of stopped them from going. The school for colored children up yonder, it’s run two or three weeks, maybe a month and a half on the outside and the word come down ... ‘cut the school out. Money’s gone’.... The money was comin’ here through white hands and they was concerned with keeping colored children out of school.... We was always left to wondering whether we would have any schools or not. White man could go up there and hire the colored children from their parents, nothing said. . . . Poor fellows, at home, cut loose from their books. White man come up there cotton choppin’ time in May . . . chaps couldn’t go to school, the school was closed down on them, . . . — better let ‘em work for him; don’t they’ll get mad with you and it’ll hurt you one way or another.”

*All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw*  
by Theodore Rosengarten

DOOMED TO A LIFE OF SHARECROPPING IN Alabama in the 1880s, Addie and Jerry Holtzclaw passionately believed that with an education their children could escape the same fate. The Holtzclaws and fellow sharecroppers built a school and hired a teacher. The landlord wanted the children to pick cotton, but Addie “outfoxed him.” William Holtzclaw remembered: “She would hide me behind skillets, ovens and pots. Then she would slip me to school the back way, pushing me through the woods and underbrush until it was safe for me to travel alone.”

When the boys got older, they had to work, but Addie arranged for them to get some education. “One day I plowed and he went to school.” William Holtzclaw recalled. “The next day he plowed and I went to school. What he learned during the day, he taught me at night and I did the same for him.”

William desired a richer education, so he wrote to Booker T. Washington, the head of Tuskegee Institute: “Dear Book, I wants to go to Tuskegee to get an ejercashun. Can I come?” “Come,” Washington replied. Tuskegee transformed William Holtzclaw and enabled him to open his own school — Utica College in Mississippi.



Champion  
of education,  
Charlotte  
Hawkins Brown.

## Discussion Questions

- In the Jim Crow era, African Americans attended segregated schools because they had no choice. Today, some African Americans argue that all-black schools are better for black students. What’s your opinion?
- Do you think that black and white students today have equal educational opportunities? What evidence do you have that supports your belief?
- Do you think that colleges should take race or ethnicity into consideration in their admission policies? Why or why not?

## Personal Account

*The experience of a whole race beginning to go to school for the first time presents one of the most interesting studies that has ever occurred with the development of any race. Few people who were not right in the midst of the scenes can form any idea of the intense desire, which the people of my race showed for an education. As I have stated, it was a whole race trying to go to school. Few were too young and none too old to attempt to learn. As fast as any kinds of teachers could be secured, not only were the day schools filled but the night schools as well. The great ambition of the older people was trying to learn the Bible before they died. With this end in view, men and women who were sixty and seventy years old would be found in the night school. Sunday schools were formed soon after freedom but the principal book studied in the Sunday school was the spelling book. Day school, night school, Sunday school, were always crowded and often many would have to be turned away for lack of room.*

Booker T. Washington

# Fighting Back (1896–1917)

**W**HEN GENERAL O. O. Howard visited the Walton Spring School for formerly enslaved students in Atlanta, he asked a class what message they had for the children of the North. One student, Richard R. Wright, proudly answered: “Tell them we are rising!”

From the end of the Civil War through Reconstruction to the end of the Jim Crow era, African Americans continued to rise. Wright himself became a bank president. Although whites tried to thwart any black progress during the Jim Crow era, they

failed to do so. Black businessmen believed that through economic uplift, racial solidarity and loyalty to America, African

Americans would triumph over segregation. Booker T. Washington advised his black audience they could prove their worthiness as Americans by succeeding economically. “There was room at the top,” he said. As the *New York Age* expressed it, “The almighty dollar is the magic wand that knocks the bottom out of race prejudice.”

Black businesses catered to the white community during the 1880’s, but as Jim Crow intensified, they served only the black community. Men and women

like George Merrick, C.C. Spaulding, Minnie Cox, and Alonzo Herndon built successful life insurance companies. Frank Church became a real estate magnate, Maggie Walker a banker. Others founded successful funeral homes, barber shops, saloons, livery stables, and construction companies.

Few professions or white-collar jobs were available to black women. Some worked in churches and women’s clubs. The one profession that was open to them was teaching. By the turn of the century, there were more

women teachers than men.

Black bourgeois families mirrored the Victorian model, which stressed monogamy, chastity, hard work, thrift, godliness, cleanliness, and patriarchal rule. But if black professionals identified with their white counterparts, whites did not reciprocate. Middle class whites felt more in common with “poor whites,” whom they generally loathed, than with middle class blacks.

Most middle class blacks subscribed to a doctrine of racial uplift — especially when it came to the working class poor. Black women dedicated their energies to improving the life of poor people. While racial uplift provided needed help, it also served to divide the black community between middle class and working class.

Despite numerous obstacles, the black middle class played a major role in providing leadership for the black community. It provided numerous leaders for the Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ■

*Essay by Richard Wormser, the producer and episode writer/director of The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow.*



A 19th century photograph of customers frequenting a black-owned pharmacy.

## Program Summary

*Denied their rights, blacks created their own churches, schools, businesses, and clubs. In Wilmington, North Carolina, a successful black middle class became the target of rioters in a white supremacist political campaign. African Americans persisted. Charlotte Hawkins Brown built quality schools while black musicians created the blues and jazz. The black community in Atlanta, Georgia, maintained five colleges despite a violent riot in 1906. In 1910, W.E.B. Du Bois left Atlanta to join the newly founded National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an interracial civil rights organization. Dr. Du Bois fought for black rights and against segregation in the federal government.*

The following is an excerpt from *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*. Garvey was a charismatic black leader who formed the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in the early twentieth century, hoping to organize a massive emigration of blacks back to Africa. His goal was to uplift the race.

**“Lift up yourselves men, take yourselves out of the mire and hitch your hope to the stars; yes, rise as high as the stars themselves.”**

When we come to consider the history of man, was not the Negro a power, was he not great once? Yes, honest students of history can recall the day when Egypt, Ethiopia and Timbuktu towered in their civilizations, towered above Europe, towered above Asia.... Why then should we lose hope? Black men, you were once great, you shall be great again. Lose

not courage, lose not faith, go forward. The thing to do is get organized: keep separated and you will be exploited, you will be robbed, you will be killed. Get organized and you will compel the world to respect you.... Lift up yourselves men, take yourselves out of the mire and hitch your hope to the stars; yes, rise as high as the stars themselves.

**Left:** Portrait of the Sadgwar family, prominent members of the Wilmington middle class. **Right:** A young girl receives piano lessons from a black piano teacher.



## Discussion Questions

- When the black middle class emerged after the end of slavery, it began to distinguish itself from the working class. Do you think that class distinctions still exist today within the African American community?
- Do you think that black businessmen and women today have a relatively equal chance of succeeding? Do you know any black businesspeople who have done so? How did they succeed?
- Do you think that those who have succeeded in the African American community have any responsibility to those who have not been as fortunate? Why or why not?

## Personal Account

The success of the black middle class and its attempts to win political power infuriated many whites. They saw it as an attempt by blacks to get out of “their place.” In 1898, a race riot occurred in Wilmington, North Carolina. Middle class blacks were one of the main targets. The following quote is an eye-witness account of the riots by Reverend Alan Kirk, a black minister.

*Firing began and it seemed like a mighty battle in wartime. They went on firing it seemed as every living Negro, poured volleys into fleeing men like sportsmen firing at rabbits in an open field; the shrieks and screams of children, of mothers and wives, caused the blood of the most inhuman person to creep; men lay on the street dead and dying while members of their race walked by unable to do them any good.*

# Don't Shout Too Soon (1918–1940)

**T**HE RETURN OF BLACK SOLDIERS FROM overseas at the end of World War I fueled a heightened determination among blacks, North and South, to secure the promise of democracy. Nearly a quarter of a million black soldiers had fought on the battlefields of Europe. Their experience led to the “New Negro” movement of the post-war era. A local NAACP leader in Austin, Texas, reported, “They have returned to old homes but they are not going to submit to old ways.”

Whites mounted fierce resistance to any changes in the racial status quo, and tensions exploded in race riots and lynchings during 1919 — a reign of terror that suppressed many

against lynching, in the efforts of black sharecroppers to organize, and in the pioneering legal work of Charles Hamilton Houston.

Houston, a veteran of World War I, came back from the war committed to studying law and “fighting for those who could not fight back.” After completing his law degree at Harvard Law School, he joined the faculty at Howard University Law School, where he trained a generation of civil rights lawyers, among them Thurgood Marshall.

In 1934, at the height of the Depression, Charles Hamilton Houston became general counsel for the NAACP. With Marshall working as his assistant, Houston tapped into the

## Program Summary

*African American soldiers returning home after World War I faced an epidemic of race riots while the NAACP expanded an anti-lynching campaign.*

*When the white president of Fisk University accommodated the Jim Crow views of influential white funders, black students forced his removal with a strike. Hundreds of thousands of blacks left the South, including musicians and writers who gave birth to the Harlem Renaissance. In the cotton fields, sharecroppers, aided by Communist organizers, began to oppose their landlords. The NAACP, now led by Walter White and Charles Hamilton Houston, began to challenge Jim Crow in the courts. Houston's strategies would become the basis for the final assault against Jim Crow 20 years later.*



Black American soldiers dance with French women, breaking a strictly upheld taboo in America.

of the promising efforts that came out of the war.

But the spirit of the New Negro endured. It nurtured an outpouring of cultural, literary and musical creativity that flowered in the Harlem Renaissance, in the works of people like Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Zora Neale Hurston, Sterling Brown, and Aaron Douglas. It also found expression in Marcus Garvey and his United Negro Improvement Association, the largest mass black organization in the United States, which celebrated racial pride and promoted black economic development. Scattered protests continued into the Depression era, on black campuses, in the campaign

rising expectations stirred by the New Deal and launched a concerted campaign to dismantle Jim Crow laws. Houston and Marshall traveled thousands of miles throughout the South, enlisting blacks in a struggle that would be played out in communities, at the polling booths and in courtrooms — quietly laying the groundwork for the Civil Rights movement of the post World War II decades. ■

*Essay by Patricia Sullivan, author of Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era.*

Left: Flag flown at NAACP's New York headquarters.  
Right: Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas working at easel.



## Discussion Questions

■ W.E.B. Du Bois looked to the “Talented Tenth” to provide leadership in the struggle for black liberation and civil rights. Why do you agree or disagree with this? Is this an elitist concept?

■ In 1934, Du Bois argued that the interests of black students would be best served in separate schools, sparking a spirited debate within the NAACP. What factors led Du Bois to this conclusion? What relevance, if any, does this debate have today?

■ With the normal channels of political participation closed to African Americans in the South in the 1930s, Charles Hamilton Houston envisioned the black lawyer as “a social engineer,” as one who would “anticipate, guide, and interpret his group’s advancement.” How successful was Houston in realizing this ideal?

## “It was a great shock . . . and made many people face up to a situation.”

In the spring of 1931, nine young black men were charged with raping two white women near Scottsboro, Alabama. They were quickly tried amid a mob atmosphere and sentenced to death. Charles Hamilton Houston called it a “judicial lynching.”



W.E.B. Du Bois.

The International Legal Defense, the legal arm of the American Communist Party, secured new trials and mounted mass protests demanding that the “Scottsboro Boys” be freed. It would be years before all of the men were released from prison. But their lives were spared, and the publicity surrounding the case revealed the harsh realities of segregation. A contemporary compared it to the dramatic impact of the police assault on protesters in Birmingham in 1963: “It was a great shock . . . and made many people face up to a situation.”

For Houston, the Scottsboro case represented a pivotal event in the development of black protest. All who joined in the fight, Houston wrote, “were made to feel that even without the ordinary weapons of democracy . . . [they] still had the force . . . with which they themselves could bring to bear pressures and effect the result of the trial and arbitrations.” It would be remembered, he said, as “a milestone” in American history.

## Personal Account Walter White on Election Terror in Florida, *New Republic*, Jan. 12, 1921

*The recent election brought into full play all of the fear that “white supremacy” would crumble if Negroes were allowed to vote, augmented by the belief that the recent war experiences of the Negro soldier had made him less tractable than before. In many southern cities and towns, parades of the Klan were extensively advertised in advance and held on . . . the Saturday before the election. . . Today, the Negro is neither so poor nor so ignorant nor so easily terrified [as in the days after Emancipation], a fact known by everybody but the revivers of the Ku Klux Klan. Instead of running for cover, frightened, his mood now is to protect himself and his family by fighting to the death.*

*This can best be shown by the attitude of the Negroes of Jacksonville [Florida]. An old colored woman, standing on Bay Street as she watched the parade of Klansmen on the Saturday night before the election, called out derisively to the marchers:*

*“Buckra [poor white people], you ain’t done nothing. Those German guns didn’t scare us and we know white robes won’t do it now.”*

*. . . Whatever the intentions of the sponsors of the parade, it acted as an incentive to bring to the polls on Election Day men and women voters who had before been indifferent. . .*



A black American soldier with captured Nazis in Germany, 1945.

PROGRAM FOUR:

## Terror and Triumph (1940–1954)

**I** SPENT THE SUMMER OF 1971 IN A CENTRAL ALABAMA town where I had gone to interview a former cotton farmer by the name of Ned Cobb. Forty years earlier, Cobb had belonged to a militant organization called the Sharecroppers Union. He spent twelve years in prison for his part in a shoot-out with the sheriff's deputies who tried to take

away his neighbor's livestock for non-payment of debt. Mornings I would sit with Cobb on the veranda of his tool shed as he whittled strips of live oak and answered my questions about the past. Afternoons I would cool off in a nearby lake — the municipal pool had been drained years before and filled with concrete so that white and black children would not swim together. Evenings, I coached a baseball team in the local Dixie Youth League — an organization founded in 1954 when the national office of the Little League ordered its state branches to integrate. Now Dixie Youth was defying its origins as the walls of separation came tumbling down around the baseball diamonds of the rural South. "Once you play ball with them," the father of my first baseman confided, as his son's black teammates climbed into the back of his pick-up after a game, "you don't

out of the same boat or to sit at the table and play cards or checkers? What interest was served by requiring black and white witnesses to swear on different Bibles? Were whites and blacks who worked in cotton mills really expected to obey a law that forbade them from looking out of the same window? The minutia of Jim Crow may strike us today as comical, but its intent was deadly serious.

Black GI's returning from World War II expected to find things changed when they got home but were bitterly disappointed. They had fought like men, but whites persisted in calling them "boy." Their uniforms and medals were met with derision. They still had to tip their hats, step aside in the streets, sit at the back of the bus, and make way for whites at intersections. But while they were fighting to free Europe of Hitler, black GI's had re-imagined their place in a democratic society. The ones who returned to fight inequality and discrimination battled in virtual anonymity in the era before television.

Time, which had appeared to stand still in the era of the mule and plow, was now on the side of the downtrodden. The defeat of Nazism had discredited the doctrine of "scientific racism," and the nation was less willing to accept a southern solution to the race question. In a historic turn-about, Harry S. Truman, a president from the border state of Missouri, declared that the federal government stood with Americans who aspired to equal rights. The courts became platforms for challenging the status quo. The law was beginning to side with the disfranchised. Black protest rose rapidly to revolution. ■

*Essay by Theodore Rosengarten, author of All God's Dangers: The Life of Nate Shaw and TOMBEE: Portrait of a Cotton Planter.*

### Program Summary

*Returning home from military service in World War II, African Americans like Charles and Medgar Evers were unwilling to resume life in segregated America. With a Supreme Court decision making all-white political primaries illegal, blacks like John Wesley Dobbs in Georgia organized voter registration drives. President Harry Truman involved the federal government in civil rights issues for the first time since Reconstruction. A student strike organized by Barbara Johns against unequal schools in Farmville, Virginia, became one of five cases that the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed when it ruled segregation unconstitutional in May of 1954 in Brown v. Board of Education.*

want to play without them."

People accommodated quickly to the new order, so why had Jim Crow ruled for so long? Why had the southern states deemed it a crime for white and black people to fish

contend that the Negro is the creative voice of America, *is* creative America, and it was a happy day in America when the first unhappy slave was landed on its shores. There, in our tortured induction into this “land of liberty,” we built its most graceful civilization. Its wealth, its flowering fields, its handsome homes, its pretty traditions, its guarded leisure, and its music were all our creations. . . .

It is our voice that sang “America” when America grew too lazy, satisfied and confident to sing, before the dark threats and fire-lined clouds of destruction frightened it into a thin, panicky quaver.

We are more than a few isolated instances of courage, valor, achievement. We’re the injection, the shot in the arm that has kept America and its gotten principles alive in the fat and corrupt years intervening between our divine conception and our near-tragic present.

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington, 1941

Left: Blacks exercise their right to vote.  
Right: A mock lynching.



Mrs. Nettie Hunt with her daughter Nickie on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court, after the Brown vs. Board desegregation ruling.

**“It is our voice that sang ‘America’ when America grew too lazy, satisfied and confident to sing....”**

## Discussion Questions

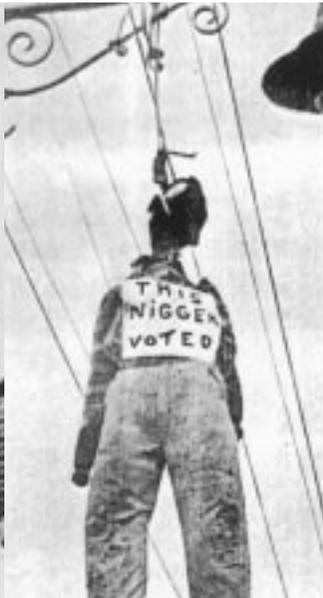
- Opposition to Jim Crow was not confined to the North and not confined to black people either. Many white southerners hated segregation but did not speak out, yet tried in private to treat all people with dignity. What circumstances in your life keep you from protesting injustice? Do you feel responsible for correcting conditions that may stem from past social practices?

- Are there circumstances under which you could justify joining a sorority, fraternity, or social club that openly discouraged membership by blacks, Jews, or any other group?

- How would you respond to the argument that segregation created more opportunities for blacks than integration, because separate black institutions employed more principals and teachers, for example, in schools set aside for blacks, than did racially mixed schools?

- Does the display of the Confederate battle flag bother you? Construct an argument in favor of taking the flag down or leaving it up on the dome of a state capitol building.

- What passages from the books of your religious tradition would you cite to support your position on the role that race should play in modern life?



“It was in the state of Georgia, in 1946, that a young Negro veteran named Maceo Snipes learned that by Supreme Court ruling he had a right to vote. No Negro had voted in his county since Reconstruction, but Maceo Snipes went down and registered. The following morning he was sitting on his porch and a white man came up and killed him with a shotgun. His funeral was held the next day and in the midst of the funeral oration, Maceo’s mother rose and moved up through the crowd, up to his coffin, where they waited to lower it into the earth. And she asked her second son to come forth. He was 17. And she said to him, ‘Put your hand on this coffin, and swear on the body of your brother than when you get to be 21, you’re going down to the courthouse to do what he did — to vote.’ ”

Henry Wallace  
Progressive Party Candidate for President  
“Radio Address,” September, 1948

PHOTO  
CREDITS

BOTTOM: RIGHT STETSON KENNEDY