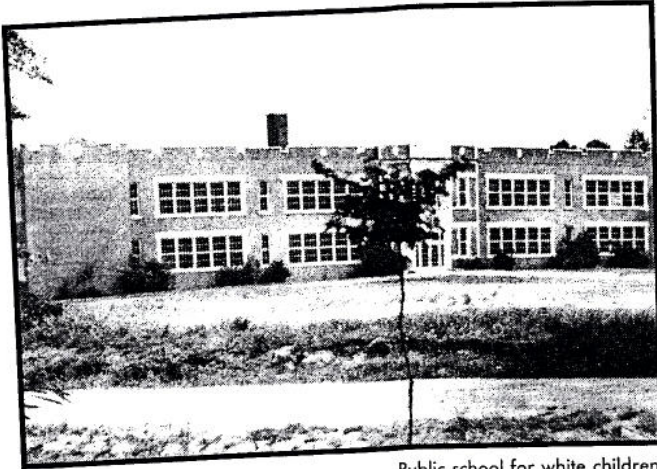
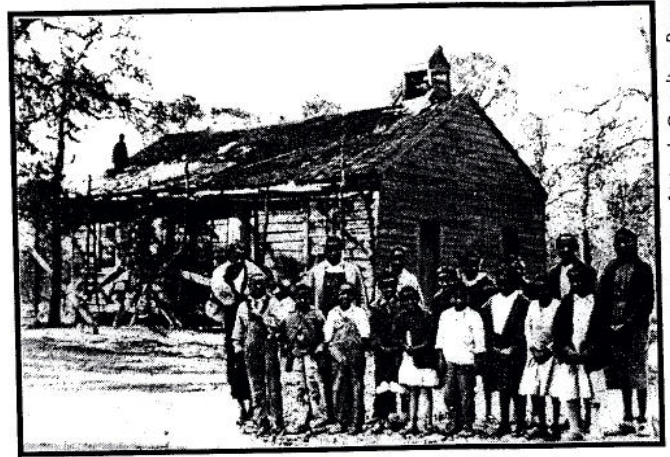


SEGREGATED SCHOOLS in the South



Public school for white children



Public school for black children

During the 1920s and 1930s Arthur F. Raper collected stories and data for the Georgia Committee of Interracial Cooperation. Here are some of his findings published in 1936 in *Preface to Peasantry*.

Description of Rural Negro Schools

The schoolrooms were without window sash and panes. Wooden shutters where glass windows should be mean that cold days, whether fair or rainy, will be dark days. To keep warm the pupils are forced to sit in close circles around the stove. In cold, cloudy weather it is scarcely possible to see well enough to read. . . .

Either church pews or benches are the seating facilities in 87.9 per cent of the rural Negro schoolrooms. . . . Usually the pews or benches can be moved, and the [seating] appointment of the schoolroom is often nothing more than each pupil's attempting to find a comfortable place, not too hot or too cold. . . . The teachers insist that the larger pupils allow the smaller ones to sit nearer the stove—so all day long, and all winter long the

larger students, trying to get near enough to the stove to keep warm, push the smaller ones so close to the stove that they have to move back. . . .

A blackboard of some type was found in each school; many, however, were nothing more than a wide unplanned pine board which had been stained black. . . . Library books were altogether lacking; maps were seen only occasionally. . . .

In twelve rural Negro schoolrooms . . . there was no table for the teacher; in twenty-four instances . . . there was no chair. In most cases, the pupils drink water from a common bucket and a common cup, though in a few schools each pupil brings a drinking cup—a tumbler, a tin cup, a salmon can, a baking powder box.

continued

Segregated Schools *continued*

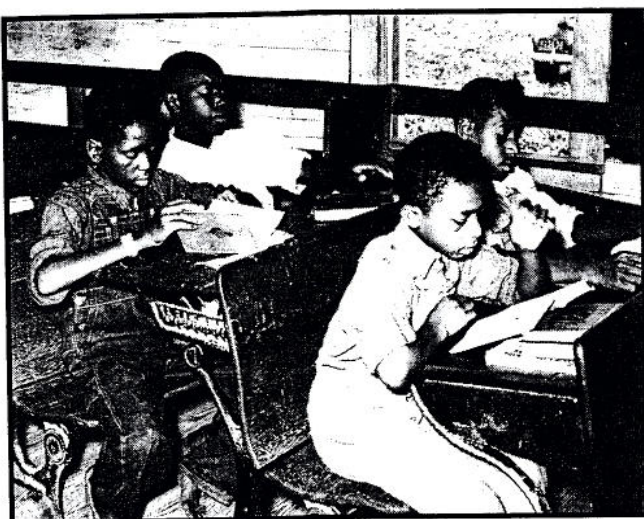
Living on a Black Teacher's Salary

What will the rural Negro teacher's salary buy these days? It will buy three meals a day, provided each meal costs less than twenty-six cents; or if the average cost of meals is reduced to eighteen cents, a room for five dollars a month can be secured. Of course it does not, but just suppose this eighteen-cents-per-meal board and five-dollars-per-month room included laundry, doctor's

Beltmann



Beltmann



bills and medical supplies, periodicals and newspapers and books, tooth brushes and cosmetics, and contributions to church and societies—there would even then be left not one cent with which the teacher could buy a hat or dress or pair of shoes, not one cent left to take a trip to a near-by town or to pay her expenses at the next summer school. She may, indeed, not be able to pay her board and transportation, and so abandon teaching to enter domestic service.

Beltmann

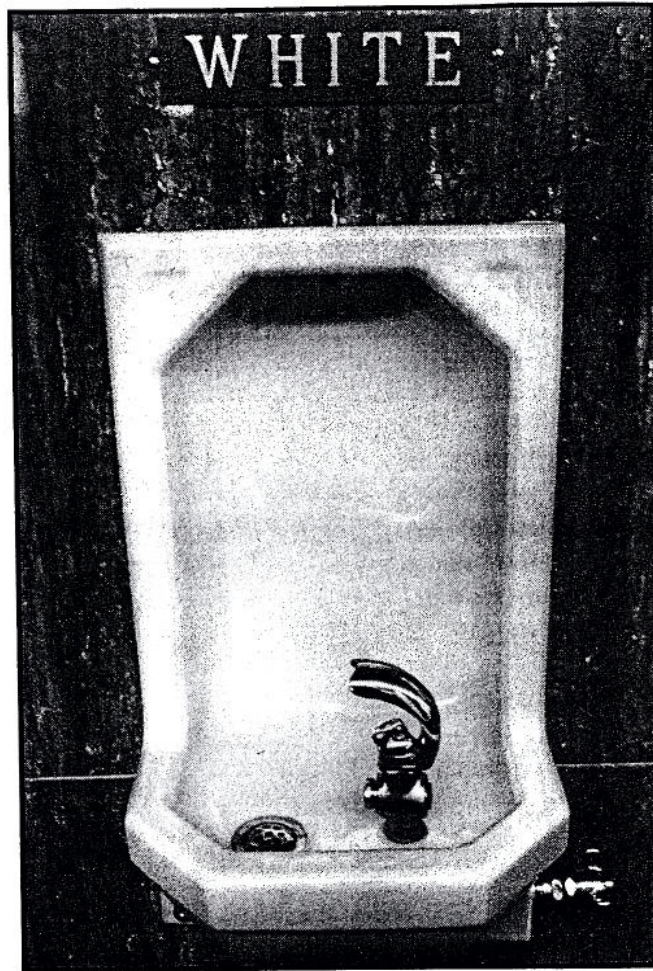


Jim Crow

The term "Jim Crow" dates to 1830 when Thomas Rice, a famous white entertainer, watched a black singer-dancer performing in an alley. Rice copied the street performer's dance routine and expanded the song. The lyrics to Rice's version became famous around the world.

Wheel about, turn about
Dance jest so—
Every time I wheel about
I shout Jim Crow.

Rice's song and dance act, which stereotyped and degraded African Americans, became very popular with white audiences in the United States. In a short time, "Jim Crow" became a label for laws and practices that treated African Americans as second-class citizens. The following examples of state laws and codes show the extent of Jim Crow segregation.

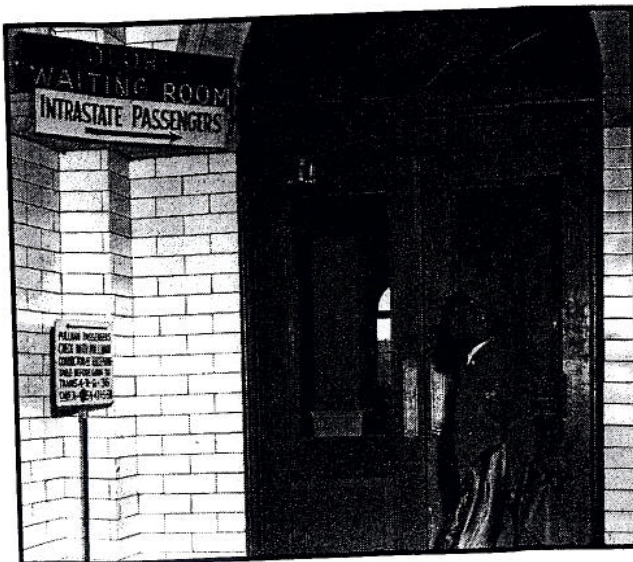


Magnum Photos

Equal but Separate Accommodations

All railroads carrying passengers in this state, other than street railroads, shall provide equal but separate accommodations for the white and colored races, by providing two or more passenger cars for each passenger train, or by dividing the passenger cars by partitions, so as to secure separate accommodations.

—Code of Alabama, 1923



Bettmann

continued

Jim Crow *continued*

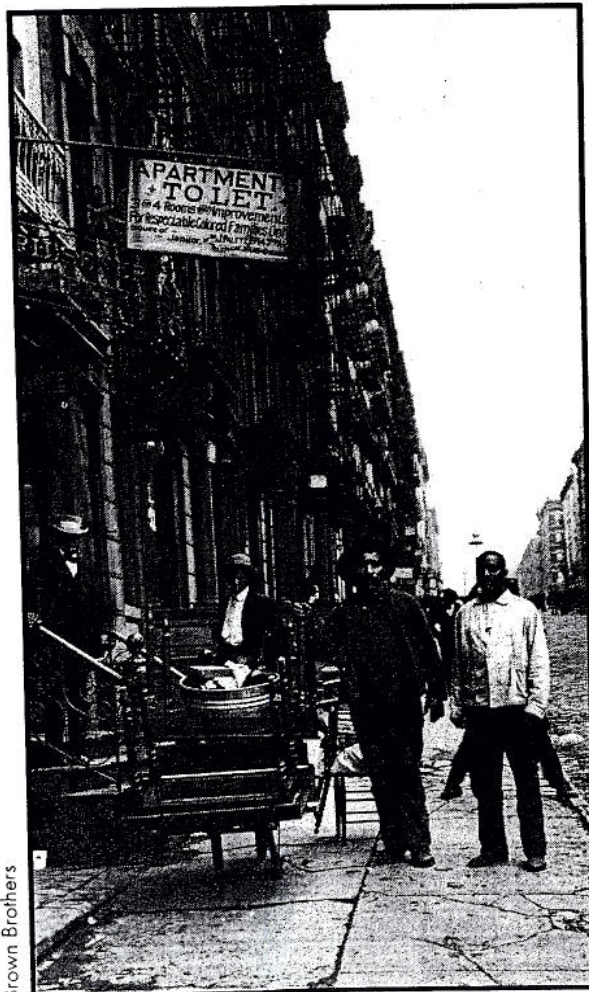
Separate Eating Places

All persons, firms or corporations who employ members of the white and negro races and provide them with eating or drinking facilities shall provide separate eating places in separate rooms, and separate eating and drinking utensils for members of the white and negro races.

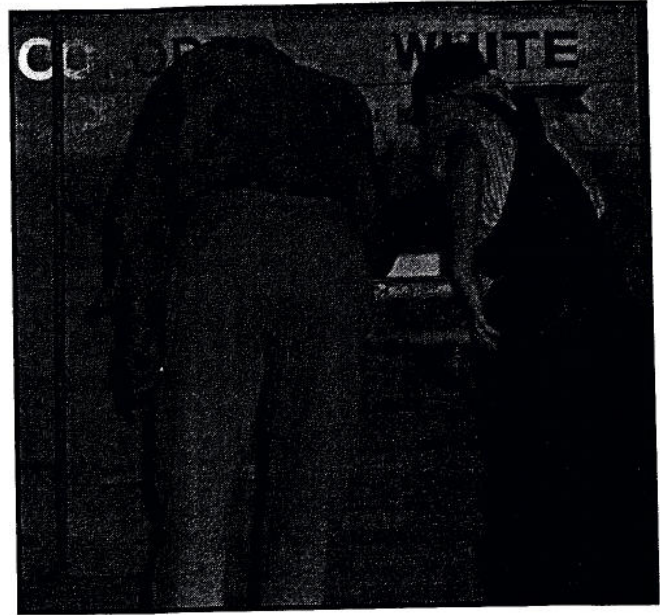
All such sanitary facilities, eating places and drinking facilities shall be designated "FOR WHITES ONLY" and "FOR COLORED ONLY" respectively.

Any person . . . violating the provisions . . . shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction, shall be fined not less than \$100 or more than \$1,000 and imprisoned for not less than 60 days or more than 1 year.

—Louisiana Statutes, 1956



Brown Brothers



University of Louisville

Separate Parks and Recreation Centers

All public parks, recreation centers, playgrounds, community centers and other such facilities at which swimming, dancing, golfing, skating or other recreational activities are conducted shall be operated separately for members of the white and colored races. . . .

—Louisiana Statutes, 1956

Social Equality

Any person, firm or corporation who shall be guilty of printing, publishing or circulating printed, typewritten or written matter urging . . . social equality or . . . intermarriage between whites and negroes, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to a fine not exceeding five hundred dollars or imprisonment not exceeding six months. . . .

—Mississippi Code, 1945

About the Author

Mildred D. Taylor

Mildred Taylor grew up with stories. Taylor loved to sit by the fireplace in her childhood home and listen to her father tell family stories. She says that her father's tales were full of ordinary people. Some were brave, recalls Taylor, but others were "people who had done nothing more spectacular than survive in a society designed for their destruction."

Taylor recalls being spellbound not only by the stories her father told, but also by the manner in which he told them. She began to imagine herself as a storyteller, making people laugh at themselves or "nod with pride about some stunning feat of heroism." But Taylor was a shy and quiet child, so she kept to herself the stories she created.

By the time Taylor entered high school, she was confident that she could be a writer—even though she wasn't particularly good at it. She just made up her mind that she could do it. Taylor credits this confidence to her father. Throughout her childhood he "impressed upon my sister and me that we were somebody, that we were important and could do or be anything we set our minds to do or be."

It was also during her high school years that Taylor first felt the need to learn an accurate and unbiased history of her people. The lessons devoted to African Americans caused her painful embarrassment. According to the textbooks, black slaves were docile and childlike and accepted their roles without complaint. She recalls that there was a terrible contradiction between what the books said and what she had learned from her family.

Taylor decided that through her writing she would create a different image of African Americans. She wanted to show the values and principles by which she and so many other black children were raised: self-respect, integrity, independence, strong family bonds, and love of nature and the land.

After high school, Taylor studied journalism and traveled to Africa to teach history and English for the Peace Corps. During those years, she found herself continually thinking about the stories she had heard during childhood. She explains, "I was deeply drawn to the roots of that inner world I knew so well."

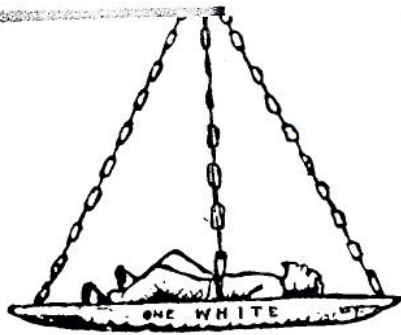
One story in particular kept coming back to Taylor. It was about the destruction of some beloved trees on her family land in Mississippi. The story took on new meaning as she struggled to create fiction from that piece of family history. Finally, she decided to tell it through the voice of Cassie Logan, a spirited eight-year-old. From that seed idea grew the book *Song of the Trees* (1975).

But Taylor didn't want to stop the story there. She felt that she could show more of the warmth and dignity of the African-American culture through Cassie and her family. She began to give the characters greater detail, once again drawing on those stories she had heard in childhood. The book that resulted from this effort was *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* (1976), which later won the Newbery Medal and other awards.

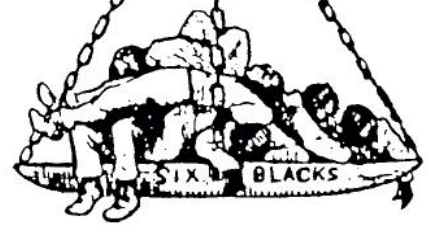
The story of the Logan family is continued in *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* (1981) and *The Friendship* (1987). Taylor plans to publish more novels that will take the Logan children into adulthood. She has also written *Mississippi Bridge* (1990), a story told by Jeremy Simms, Cassie Logan's white friend.

Taylor says that she cares for the Logans because they represent her own family and other families who have faced the same troubles and survived. Her hope for her young readers is that "the Logans will provide those heroes missing from [their] own childhoods, black men, women, and children of whom they can be proud."

Although Taylor considers writing a lonely and terrifying business, she has fulfilled her childhood ambition—she has become a writer who tells the truth about her people.



GLOSSARY



Understanding who the following people are or what the following terms mean may help you better understand *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*.

chain gang: group of convicts chained together, especially while working outdoors.

commissary: only store for sharecroppers to buy food, clothing, and farm supplies; usually operated by landowner.

Confederacy (The Confederate States of America): Civil War government formed by the Southern states from 1861-1865 after they seceded from the United States of America.

Jefferson Davis: president of the Confederacy during the Civil War (1861-1865).

discrimination: unequal or unfair treatment of an individual or group.

W. E. B. Du Bois: black leader and author who encouraged African Americans to take pride in their heritage.

foreclose: to force a borrower to give up property—usually a house or farm—when payments to the lender have not been made.

integrate: to give all people equal entry to services and public places such as housing, schools, transportation, recreation, etc.

Ku Klux Klan: group whose members believe in the superiority of white Pro-

testant Americans over other racial, ethnic, and religious groups.

lynching: to kill by mob action; no court of law or legal authority is involved.

mortgage: loan given when the borrower promises to give up property—usually a house or land—if loan payments are not made to the bank.

night riders: groups of whites who terrorize blacks and other minority groups by lynching.

plantation: large farm that uses many workers to grow and harvest one main crop.

Reconstruction: (1865-1877) period following the U.S. Civil War, when the defeated South was rebuilt physically, economically, and socially.

segregate: to separate races or ethnic groups in all aspects of social life such as housing, schools, transportation, recreation, etc.

sharecropper: person who farms land owned by someone else and whose payment for working the land is a share of the crop.

Uncle Tomming: phrase to describe African Americans who try to gain acceptance by pleasing whites; based on the Uncle Tom character in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

MOB VIOLENCE

Some people actively promoted hatred and distrust between the races during the Jim Crow era. This hatred was often responsible for mob violence against African Americans.

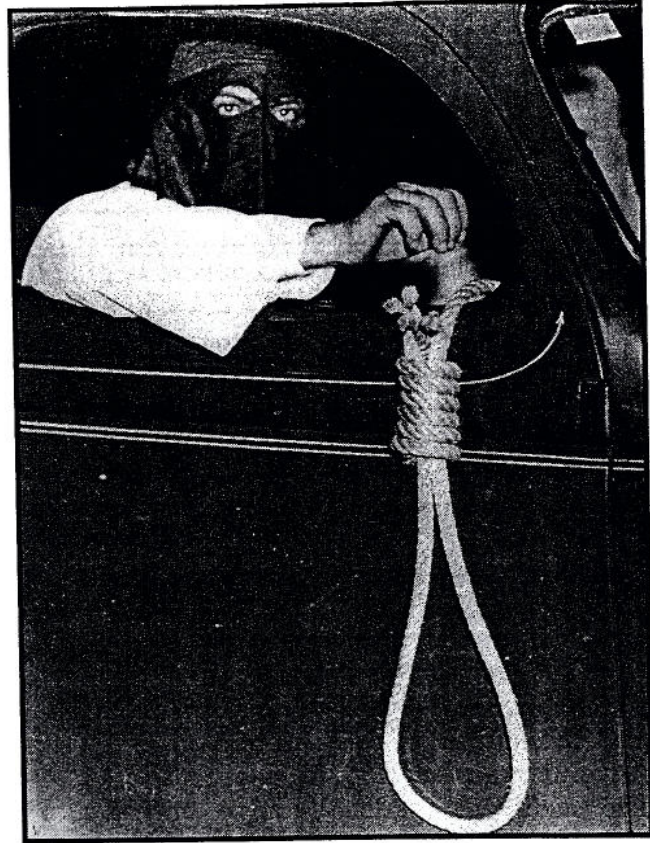
.....
Writer Mark Twain commented on the psychology of lynch mobs in his essay "The United States of Lyncherdom." He wrote his comments in 1901, but the essay was not published until 1923.

Why does a crowd . . . pretend to enjoy a lynching? Why does it lift no hand nor voice in protest? Only because it would be unpopular to do it, I think; each man is afraid of his neighbor's disapproval—a thing which to the general run of the race is more dreaded than wounds and death. When there is to be a lynching the people hitch up and come miles to see it, bringing their wives and children. Really to see it? No—they come only because they are afraid to stay at home, lest it be noticed and offensively commented upon.

.....
It was not unusual for night riders to attack a whole community of black people. However, mobs usually unleashed their frenzy on one individual. The outcome could be vicious, such as in this courtroom scene from Ray Stannard Baker's Following the Colour Line.

Scene: a courtroom in Statesboro, Georgia, in 1904. Two blacks had just been convicted of murder.

In the court-room, sentence had been passed on Reed and Cato, and the judge had just congratulated the people on "their splendid regard for the law under very trying conditions." Then the mob



Wide World Photos

broke in. A brother of the murdered Hodges, a minister from Texas, rose magnificently to the occasion. With tears streaming down his face, he begged the mob to let the law take its course.

"We don't want religion, we want blood," yelled a voice.

The mob was now thoroughly stirred; it ceased to hesitate; it was controlled wholly by its emotions. The leaders plunged down the court-room and into the witness chamber, where the Negroes sat with their wives, Reed's wife with a young baby. . . .

"Burn them! burn them!"

Some one referred the question to the father-in-law of Hodges. He said Hodges' mother wished the men burned. That settled it. Men were sent into town for kerosene oil and chains, and finally the Negroes were bound to an old stump and each was drenched with oil. Then the crowd stood back accommodatingly, while a photographer, standing there in the bright sunshine, took pictures of the

continued

Mob Violence *continued*

chained Negroes. Citizens crowded up behind the stump and got their faces in the photograph. When the [fire was] lighted, the crowd yelled wildly.... They threw knots and sticks at the writhing creatures, but always left room for the

photographer to take more pictures.

And when it was all over, they began, in common with all mobs, to fight for souvenirs. They scrambled for the chains before they were cold, and precious links were divided among the populace.

The Tuskegee Institute kept the following record of lynchings in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

Lynchings: 1900-1925

1900—115
1901—130
1902— 92
1903— 99
1904— 83
1905— 62
1906— 65
1907— 60
1908— 97
1909— 82
1910— 76
1911— 67
1912— 63
1913— 52
1914— 55
1915— 69
1916— 54
1917— 38
1918— 64
1919— 83
1920— 61
1921— 64
1922— 57
1923— 33
1924— 16
1925— 17



A Time in HISTORY

This timeline will help you place the novel in its historical period.



Library of Congress

1865

End of American Civil War; President Abraham Lincoln is assassinated; 13th Amendment abolishes slavery (1865)

Congress passes First Reconstruction Act (1867)

14th amendment makes former slaves U.S. citizens (1868)

1875

President Grant issues proclamation against Ku Klux Klan in South Carolina (1871)

Congress passes Civil Rights Bill, giving African Americans equal treatment in inns, trains, theaters, and other public places (1875)

1885

President-elect Rutherford B. Hayes ends Reconstruction by pulling federal troops from the South (1877)

Booker T. Washington opens Tuskegee Institute (1881)

1895

U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* makes segregation on railroad cars legal (1896)

1905

Race riot in Springfield, Illinois (1908)

NAACP is founded (1909)

Ku Klux Klan receives charter from Fulton County, Georgia; KKK spreads to other southern states (1915)

1915

America enters World War I (1917); nearly 50,000 black troops see combat and many receive medals of honor

World War I ends (1918)

Harlem Renaissance begins (1921)

1925

Congress fails to pass anti-lynching bill (1922)

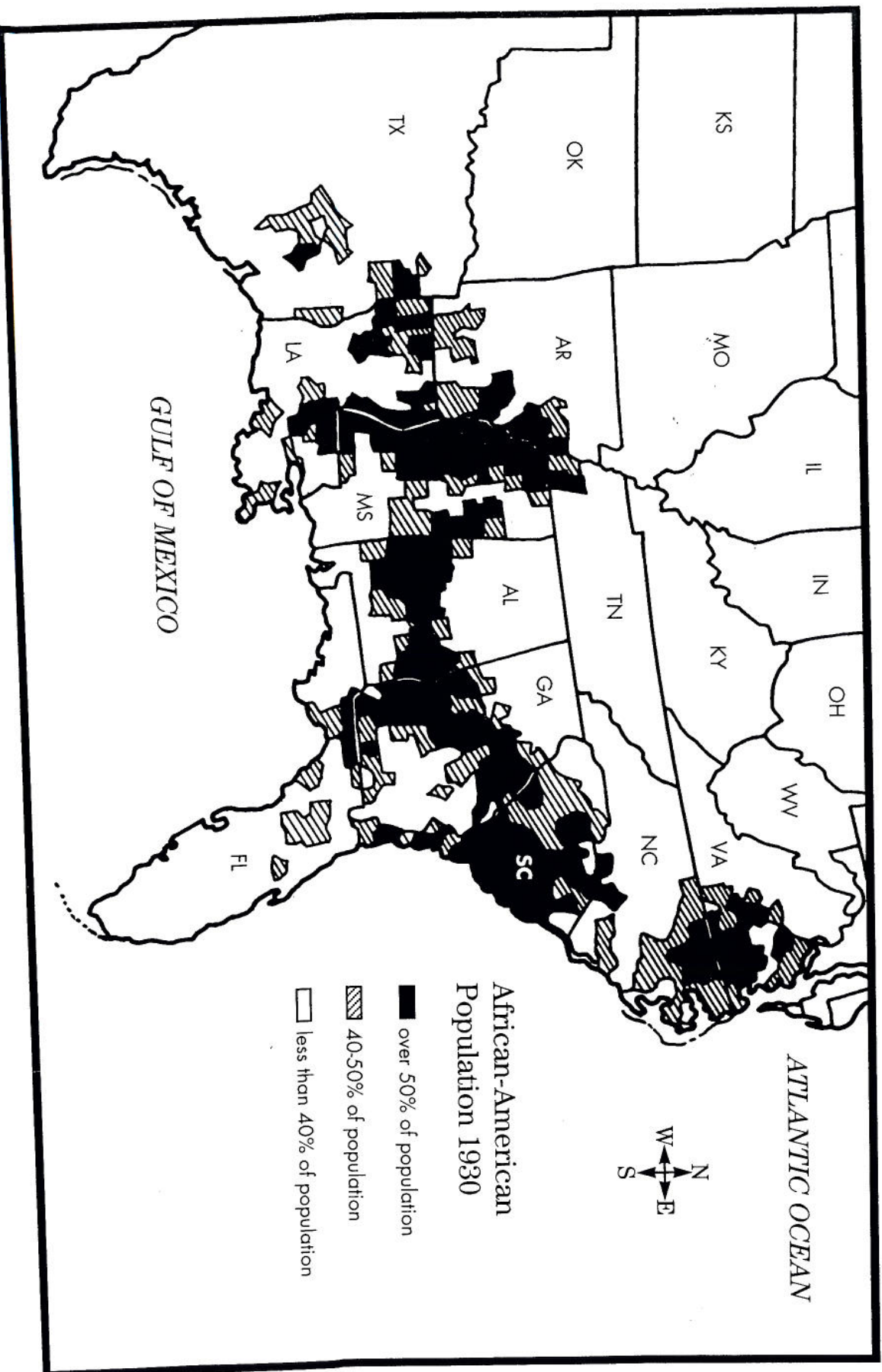
Stock market collapses (1929)

Great Depression (1930-1939)

1935

Eleanor Roosevelt resigns from the DAR in protest against the group's refusal to let black singer Marian Anderson perform at Constitution Hall (1939)

The Geographical Picture



RACIAL ETIQUETTE



Library of Congress

Written state laws known as black codes clearly set unfair limitations on African Americans. But there were unwritten codes or customs that also governed the behavior of blacks. The following selections from Dan Lacy's *The White Use of Blacks in America* are examples of proper "etiquette."

In all the contacts that were permitted between the races, Negroes were expected to behave with subservience and humility. In smaller towns they were expected to step off the sidewalk in the street to allow whites to pass. In offices and stores they were to stand aside until the business of all whites had been attended to. They spoke to whites with averted eyes and in respectful tones. Any words or attitudes that a white might think "fresh" or impudent or "uppity" might bring violent punishment.

.....
No adult white was called by his bare first name by any black. If he were well known from childhood to an older black, or he had to be distinguished from his father or his brothers, he might be "Mr. Bob" rather than "Mr. Jones," but never "Bob." Similarly, no black was ever addressed as "Mr.," "Mrs.," or "Miss." An elderly and respected Negro might be "Uncle George" or "Aunt Sarah." . . . but most Negroes, whatever their age or dignity, were plain "Jack" or "Mary," even to white youths and children.

.....
A black came to the back door, not the front door, of a white man's house. He was received, if at all, in the kitchen or porch, not in the living room. continued

Racial Etiquette *continued*

The following excerpts are from Stetson Kennedy's *Jim Crow Guide to the U.S.A.*

If you are a nonwhite and offend some white by a breach of etiquette, the usual procedure is for the white to exact an apology, and, if that is not forthcoming, to launch a physical attack upon you. If he fails to derive satisfaction in this manner, or if you seek in any wise to retaliate or defend yourself, he will likely summon a white mob or officer of the law. The officer may join in the attack upon you, and/or arrest you on some such charge as "disorderly conduct" or "assault and battery."

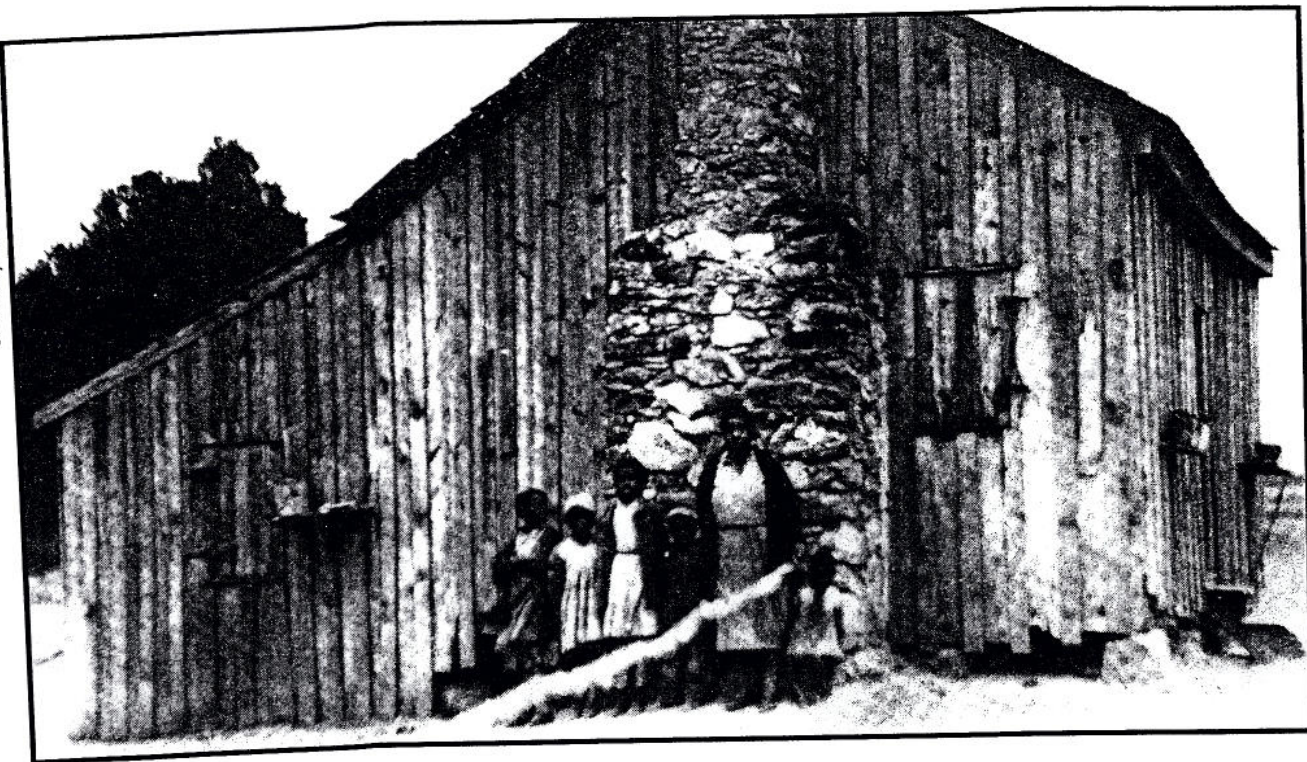
When Robert Mallard, a Georgia Negro farmer, was ambushed and shot to death by thirty masked Klansmen (1948), the white community said it was because he "drove too large a car."

I don't talk to a white man like I do to a colored. I let him do the talking—let him take the lead. That's what he wants, and if he says something to me I don't like, I say, "Now, Mr. Jones. Don't you think I ought to do so-and-so?" And then most likely he will say, "Yes." But you better not go straight at the thing with a white man, or he'll think you're trying to act smart.

When I go to a white man's house I stand in the yard and yell, and wait for him to come to the door. If he tells me to come, then I go up to the door and talk to him, but I don't go in unless he tells me. If he tells me, then I go in; but I don't sit down unless he tells me.



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The Great Depression in the South

Historians point to the stock market crash in 1929 as the beginning of the Great Depression in the United States. The next decade saw millions of people out of work, bread lines that were blocks long, and the lowest family income in fifty years.

But the Depression actually began in the South several years before. Life had been miserable for both black and white farmers and merchants for a long time.

Here an anonymous speaker in Hard Hitting Songs for Hard Hit People describes life in the South before the Depression.

I hear people always talkin' about the hard times they have been havin' since the Depression. But most of us farmers and sharecroppers and tenants here in

the south have always had depression. In 1929, before the trouble on Wall Street and in the banks, everybody was supposed to be prosperous. But we farmers in the south didn't make more than an average of a hundred and eighty-six dollars that year, all told, and a lot of us made a lot less. We had to buy tools and seed and fertilizer and pay taxes and interest on our debts out of that money. That didn't leave much for eating and buying a pair of overalls and paying a doctor when somebody was sick. And there was plenty sickness. Our young ones sickened and died of Pellagra and Consumption.*

**Pellagra is a sickness caused by a poor diet; consumption is another word for "tuberculosis."*



Library of Congress

An Offer to Share the Crops

*The following excerpt is from **Lanterns on the Levee** by William Alexander Percy—the grandson of a former slave owner. Here Percy summarizes the offer that his grandfather made to former slaves shortly after the Civil War.*

I have land which you need, and you have muscles which I need; let's put what we've got in the same pot and call it ours. I'll give you all the land you can work, a house to live in, a garden plot and room to raise chickens, hogs, and cows if you can come by them, and all the wood you want to cut for fuel. I'll direct and oversee you. I'll get you a doctor when you are sick. Until the crop comes in I'll try to keep you from going hungry or naked insofar as I am able. I'll pay the taxes and I'll furnish the mules and plows and gear and whatever else is necessary to make a crop. This is what I promise to do. You will plant and

cultivate and gather this crop as I direct. This is what you will promise to do. When the crop is picked, half of it will be mine and half of it yours. If I have supplied you with money or food or clothing or anything else during this year, I will charge it against your half of the crop. I shall handle the selling of the cotton and the cottonseed because I know more than you do about their value. But the corn you may sell or eat or use for seed as you like. If the price of cotton is good, we shall both make something. If it is bad, neither of us will make anything, but I shall probably lose the place and you will lose nothing because you have nothing to lose. It's a hard contract in these hard times for both of us, but it's just and self-respecting and if we both do our part and have a little luck we can both prosper under it.

Ku Klux Klan Oath

The Ku Klux Klan and similar groups are still active today. In 1980, journalist Jerry Thompson secretly joined the Ku Klux Klan in order to report on its actions. He had to sign this oath to become a member.

Yesterday † Today

Tomorrow † Forever



Knights of the Ku Klux Klan

National Offices - Box 624 Metairie, LA 70004 (504) 835-7959

THE KLAN OATH

TOP SECRET

I (repeat your full name) — on this date (say date) — do before God and man — most solemnly swear — that I dedicate — my life — my fortune — and my sacred honor — to the Preservation — Protection — and Advancement of the White Race — and to that great order : — the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

SECTION I † † † † SECRECY

I swear most honestly — that I will never divulge what transpires tonight. (today)
I swear that I will forever keep secret — the signs — words — papers — and rituals of the KKK
I sacredly vow — that I will forever keep secret — the name of any fellow Klansman.
I am willing to die before revealing such secrets.

SECTION II † † † † LOYALTY

I will faithfully obey — the regulations and laws of the Knights of the KKK.
I recognise that this order is the only true Klan in existence — and that I will never associate myself — with any other "so-called" Klan organization.
I swear my undying loyalty — to the elected Grand Wizard — David Duke.

SECTION III † † † † DUTY

I will respond promptly to the needs of the KKK — I will give as much of my time — and money as possible — to further its great aims.
I will fulfill all the duties of a Klansman — for at least five years.

SECTION IV † † † † PROLIFERATION

I will actively work to expand the ranks — of the KKK.
I will not recommend for membership — any person whose loyalty is doubtful.

SECTION V † † † † FRATERNITY

Every fellow Klansman will be as a brother to me — his welfare will come before my own.
I will never slander — defraud — deceive — or in any way wrong a fellow Klansman — or a Klansman's family — nor will I permit others — to do the same — if I can so prevent it.
I will go to the aid of any fellow Klansman who requests it — at his call I will answer — I will be truly Klannish — toward all Klansmen — in all things honorable and just.

SECTION VI † † † † HONOR

I will keep secret — any secret transmitted by any other Klansman.
I will not conspire with other Klansmen to commit an illegal act of violence.
I swear that I will oppose — the enemies of our race — nation — and this order — with my life — my fortune — and my honor — and that I will oppose a serious threat — to the survival and freedom of my people — with whatever means the situation demands — If necessary — I will even sacrifice my life — in defense of fellow Klansmen — and this great order — the Knights of the KKK.
I will never judge any Klan leaders — by any newspaper account — broadcast — rumor — or any other source — other than from the authority — of this order.
I will in fact — not tolerate accusations — in my presence — against any level of Klan leadership — I recognize the duplicity of our enemies.

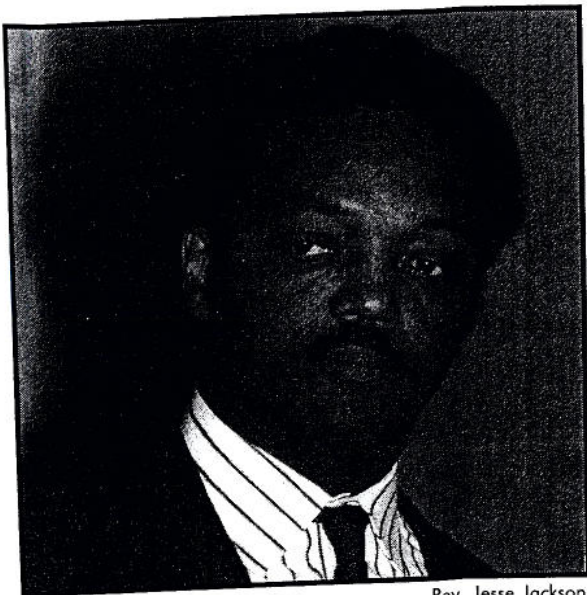
SECTION VII † † † † DEDICATION

I believe in the Constitution of the United States — and in the great race that created it.
I will work diligently — to secure the preservation — protection — and advancement of the White Race.
I believe in complete religious freedom — and in the free practice of the Christian faith — in public institutions — but also in the separation — of church and state.
I will diligently fight against — Communism — and Zionism.
I swear my loyalty — to this order forever — as the only true Klan — I shall obey its elected Grand Wizard — David Duke — and all other officers — as long as they continue with this order.
I swear I dedicate my life — from this moment forward — to fostering the welfare of the White Race — and furthering the work of America's greatest Movement — The KNIGHTS OF THE KU KLUX KLAN.

name [Signature] signature J. W. Thompson
witness [Signature] date 5-23-80

Voices from the Civil Rights Movement

From the moment Africans were brought to the New World as slaves, there have been voices calling for their freedom. That call became organized during the civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The following excerpts highlight some of these voices.



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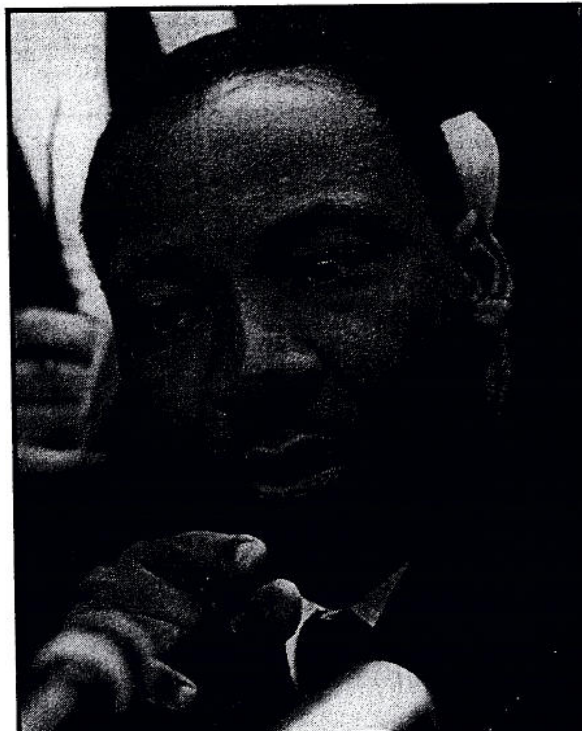
Rev. Jesse Jackson

I just want the youth of America to do me one favor. Exercise the right to dream. You must face reality—that which is. But then dream of the reality that ought to be, that must be. Live beyond the pain of reality with the dream of a bright tomorrow. Use hope and imagination as weapons of survival and progress. Use love to motivate you and obligate you to serve the human family. . . . With a made-up mind, which is the most powerful instrument in the world, you can rise above your circumstances. . . . With eyesight, you may see misery. But with insight, you can see the brighter side.

—Rev. Jesse Jackson, speech at the Democratic National Convention, July 17, 1984

We shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We will meet your physical force with soul-force. Do to us what you will and we will still love you. . . . Bomb our homes and threaten our children, and, as difficult as it is, we will still love you. Send your hooded perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hour and drag us out on some wayside road and leave us half-dead as you beat us, and we will still love you.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



Beltmann

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

continued

Voices from the Civil Rights Movement *continued*

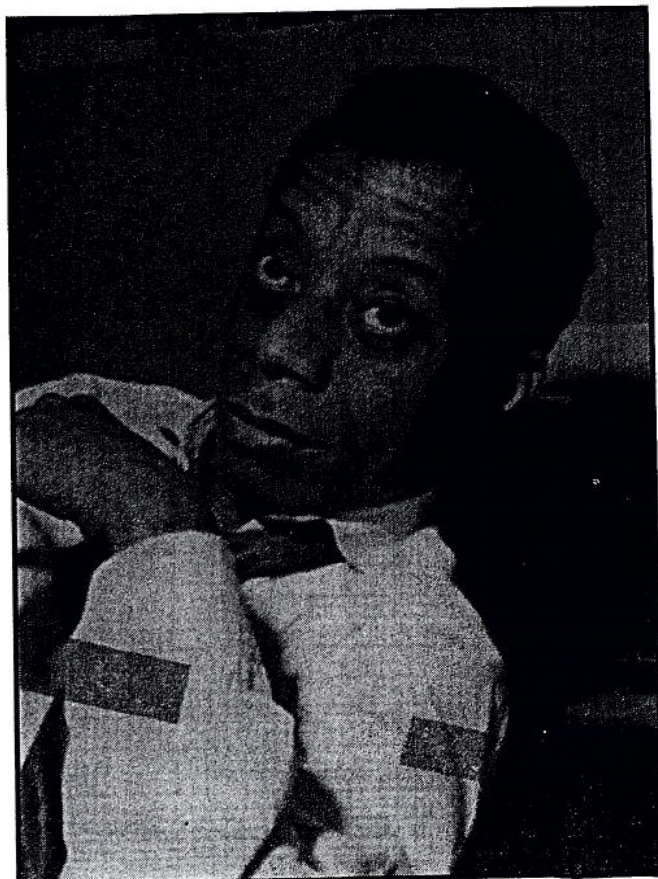
Now if I were a teacher in this school, or any Negro school, and I was dealing with Negro children, who were in my care only a few hours of every day and would then return to their homes and to the streets, children who have an apprehension of their future which with every hour grows grimmer and darker, I would try to teach them—I would try to make them know—that those streets, those houses, those dangers, those agonies by which they are surrounded, are criminal. I would

"I would teach him that there are currently very few standards in this country which are worth a man's respect."

try to make each child know that these things are the results of a criminal conspiracy to destroy him. I would teach him that if he intends to get to be a man he must at once decide that he is stronger than this conspiracy and that he must never make his peace with it. And that one of his weapons for refusing to make his peace with it and for destroying it depends on what he decides he is worth. I would teach him that there are currently very few standards in this country which are worth a man's respect. That it is up to him to begin to change these standards for the sake of the life and health of the country. I would suggest to him that the popular culture—as represented, for example, on television and in comic books and in movies—is based on fantasies created by very ill people, and he must be aware that these are fantasies that have nothing to do with reality. I would teach him that the press he reads is not as free as it says it is—and that he can

do something about that, too. I would try to make him know that just as American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it, so is the world larger, more daring, more beautiful and more terrible, but principally larger—and that it belongs to him. . . . I would suggest to him that . . . if America is going to become a nation, she must find a way—and this child must help her to find a way—to use the tremendous potential and tremendous energy which this child represents. If this country does not find a way to use that energy, it will be destroyed by that energy.

—James Baldwin—in a speech given to New York City teachers, 1963



James Baldwin