

# A History of Discrimination By Race

## The End of Slavery

Years ago, men brought people from Africa to the United States. They made the Africans work as slaves. These slaves were the property of their white masters.

It took a Civil War between the Northern and the Southern States to end **slavery** in the U.S. After this war, Congress and the States passed three amendments to the Constitution. These amendments said that African-Americans were U.S. citizens and had the rights of citizens. Look at the box on the next page to find out more about these amendments.

## Separating the Races

African-Americans were no longer slaves in the United States. But their lives were still controlled by powerful whites. Black people did the hardest work on farms and in factories for the lowest pay. Many states passed laws that said black people and white people could not use the same **facilities**, such as schools, restaurants, parks, and public bathrooms. Separating people like this because of their race, color, sex, religion, or age is called **segregation**.

Many people said that segregation by race was against the Fourteenth Amendment. They said segregation did not give everyone “equal protection of the laws.”

### Three Important Amendments that Extended the Bill of Rights

- 1865 Thirteenth Amendment—made slavery illegal in the United States
- 1868 Fourteenth Amendment—said that all states, not just the national government, must give “equal protection of the laws” to people. “Equal protection” means the law is the same for everyone; it should be applied in the same way to all people.
- 1870 Fifteenth Amendment—said that no state can stop a person from voting because of that person's race or color.

*These amendments are called the Civil War amendments.*

## Separate But Equal

In 1896, a black man named Homer Plessy wanted to change the segregation laws. He tried to ride in a train car that was for white people only, and the police arrested him.

Plessy appealed his case to the Supreme Court. He argued that segregation laws did not let black people participate in U.S. society the way white people did. He also said segregation laws limited the freedom of black people. But Plessy lost the case.

The Supreme Court said that states *could* have segregation laws if the facilities for blacks were as good as those for whites. This

became known as the “separate but equal” rule.

For the next 60 years, segregation continued. Usually, the facilities for African-Americans were not as good as those for whites. Blacks had to sit at the back of the bus. They had to use the back doors to public buildings. Schools for black students usually didn't have enough books or equipment.

Some whites believed their race was **superior**. They would not give African-Americans the same rights they had. This was an example of **racism**—unfair treatment of people based on their race.

### WHAT DO YOU KNOW?

1. How did the Thirteenth Amendment affect African-Americans?
2. Which amendment said states had to respect everybody's rights?
3. Why was Homer Plessy against segregation?
4. What did the “separate but equal” rule mean?

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

For many years, African-Americans could not go to the same stores, swimming pools, or schools as whites. How do you think this made them feel?

### VOCABULARY REVIEW

Fill in each blank with the word that **best** completes the sentence.

**discrimination**      **racist**      **segregation**      **facilities**      **superior**

1. In 1925, black people couldn't go to the same stores, churches, or schools as white people. This is called \_\_\_\_\_ of the races.
2. Ed wasn't happy when Marta got a higher grade on the test than he did. He always thought he was \_\_\_\_\_ to girls.
3. John Smith only hires men to work as mechanics at his auto shop. Some women have applied, but John says women mechanics are not as good as men. John won't hire any women mechanics. This is \_\_\_\_\_ against women.
4. “The people on the south side of town need more public \_\_\_\_\_,” said the mayor. “We need to build another hospital, a park, and two more schools in that part of town.”

5. In the 1950s, the country of South Africa passed special laws for black people. They could not vote; they had to use special I.D. cards; they could not marry white people. These are \_\_\_\_\_ laws.