6 African Americans

- How does slavery influence life today?
- What is the civil rights movement?
- What are the issues in education?
- What is the economic picture?
- How is family life?
- Why does the housing gap exist?
- What are the concerns about the criminal justice system?
- Why does a health care dilemma exist?
- Will political momentum continue?
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The past is always reflected in the present. **Sundown towns** are communities from which non-Whites were systematically excluded from living. Let’s consider the case of one sundown town. Back in 1816, Joseph Gee, a large landowner from North Carolina, settled along with his 18 slaves in a bend of the Alabama River to establish a cotton plantation. After slaves were freed, the Black workers largely remained as sharecroppers and tenant farmers up through the 1930s. People in the Alabama community, now called Gee’s Bend, became so impoverished, the Red Cross arrived to prevent starvation.

Across the river from overwhelmingly Black Gee’s Bend sits the Wilcox county seat, virtually all-White Camden. In 1962, Camden, like several communities in the South, was the site of civil rights protests. Camden was just one example of a sundown town.

The protesters came from Gee’s Bend. They came by ferry, about a ten-minute trip. The people of predominantly White Camden did not like the marchers, so the county closed down the ferry. For over three decades, the ferry remained closed, requiring the 400 residents of all-Black Gee’s Bend to drive more than 80 miles each way to get to their jobs, schools, or the hospital. Finally, in 1996, the isolation ended when ferry service was reinstated.

Two residents noted the significance of this event. “This is the first time there has been a concerted effort on the part of Blacks and Whites to do something positive,” said Perry Hale, a Black high school teacher. Newspaper publisher Hollis Curl, who is White, remarked, “It’s hard for people in other parts of the country to realize what a coming together this has been” (R. Tyson 1996).

Sundown towns like Camden emerged in the late nineteenth century and persisted for a hundred years into the late twentieth century. Although the precise number of sundown towns in the United States is unknown, it is estimated that there were several thousand such towns throughout the nation. The term **sundown town** comes from signs once posted at the city limits telling Black people to be out of town before sundown in no uncertain terms. In addition to excluding African Americans from many small towns, Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, Mexican Americans, Jews, and Native Americans—citizens and noncitizens alike—also were subject to such exclusions. In some cases, the exclusion was official town policy. In other cases, the racism policy was enforced through intimidation. This intimidation could occur in several ways, including harassment by law enforcement officers and with the blessing of local citizens. At the time the Camden ferry service was terminated, not a single Black person was registered to vote in Wilcox County (Loewen 2005, 2012; Loewen and Schaefer 2008; K. Stevens 2012).

Relationships between Whites and Blacks in the United States have been marked by many episodes like those along the Alabama River—sometimes those relationships take a step backward and occasionally a step forward.

The United States, with more than 42 million Blacks (or African Americans), has the eighth-largest Black population in the world; only Brazil and six countries in Africa have larger Black populations. Despite their large numbers, Blacks in this country have had virtually no role in major national and political decisions and, therefore, captured the world’s attention when Barack Obama was elected the first Black president in 2008 (Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel and Drewery 2011).

To a significant degree, the history of African Americans is the history of the United States. Black people accompanied the first explorers, and a Black man was among the first to die in the American Revolution. The enslavement of Africans was responsible for the South’s wealth in the nineteenth century and led to the country’s most violent domestic strife. After Blacks were freed from slavery, their continued subordination led to sporadic outbreaks of violence in the rural South and throughout urban America. This chapter begins with a brief history of African Americans into the beginning of the twenty-first century and also discusses their contemporary situation.

The Black experience in what came to be the United States began with them having something less than citizenship, but their experience was only slightly better than
slavery. In 1619, twenty Africans arrived in Jamestown as indentured servants. Their children were born free people. Blacks in the British colonies were not the first in the New World, however; some Blacks had accompanied European explorers, perhaps even Columbus. But this information is a historical footnote only. By the 1660s, the British colonies passed laws making Africans slaves for life, forbidding interracial marriages, and making children of slaves bear the status of their mother regardless of their father’s race. Slavery had begun in North America. More than three and a half centuries later, we still live with its legacy.

**Slavery**

Slavery seems far removed from the debates over issues that divide Whites and Blacks today. However, contemporary institutional and individual racism, which is central to today’s conflicts, has its origins in the institution of slavery. Slavery was not merely a lone aspect of American society for three centuries; it has been an essential part of our country’s life. For nearly half of this country’s history, slavery was not only tolerated but also was legally protected by the U.S. Constitution as interpreted by the U.S. Supreme Court.

In sharp contrast to the basic rights and privileges enjoyed by White Americans, Black people in bondage lived under a system of repression and terror. For several decades, nearly one out five people were Black and enslaved in the United States. Because the institution of slavery was so fundamental to our culture, it continues to influence Black–White relations in the twenty-first century.

**Slave Codes**

Slavery in the United States rested on five central conditions: slavery was for life, the status was inherited, slaves were considered mere property, slaves were denied rights, and coercion was used to maintain the system (Noel 1972). As slavery developed in colonial America and the United States, so did **slave codes**, laws that defined the low position of slaves in the United States. Although the rules varied from state to state and from time to time and were not always enforced, the more common features demonstrate how completely subjugated the Africans were:

1. A slave could not marry or even meet with a free Black.
2. Marriage between slaves was not legally recognized.
3. A slave could not legally buy or sell anything except by special arrangement.
4. A slave could not possess weapons or liquor.
5. A slave could not quarrel with or use abusive language toward Whites.
6. A slave could not possess property (including money) except as allowed by his or her owner.
7. A slave could neither make a will nor inherit anything.
8. A slave could not make a contract or hire him- or herself out.
9. A slave could not leave a plantation without a pass noting his or her destination and time of return.
10. No one, including Whites, was to teach a slave (in some areas, even a free Black) to read or write or to give a slave a book, including the Bible.
11. A slave could not gamble.
12. A slave had to obey established curfews.
13. A slave could not testify in court except against another slave.
Violations of these rules were dealt with in a variety of ways. Mutilation and branding were not unknown. Imprisonment was rare; most violators were whipped. An owner was largely immune from prosecution for any physical abuse of slaves. Because slaves could not testify in court, a White’s actions toward enslaved African Americans were practically above the law (ACLU 1996; Elkins 1959; Franklin and Higginbotham 2011; Stampp 1956).

Slavery, as enforced through the slave codes, controlled and determined all facets of the lives of enslaved Africans. No exceptions were made for organization of family life and religious worship. Naturally, the Africans had brought their own cultural traditions to America. In Africa, they were accustomed to a closely regulated family life and a rigidly enforced moral code. Slavery rendered it impossible for them to retain family ties in the New World as kinfolk, including their children, were scattered among plantations.

Through the research of W. E. B. Du Bois and many others, we know that slave families had no standing in law. Marriages between slaves were not legally recognized, and masters rarely respected those unions when they sold adults or children. Slave breeding—a deliberate effort to maximize the number of offspring—was practiced with little attention to the emotional needs of the slaves. The slaveholder, not the parents, decided at what age children would begin working in the fields. The slave family could not offer its children shelter or security, rewards or punishments. The man’s only recognized family role was to sire offspring—be the sex partner of a woman. In fact, slave men often were identified as a slave woman’s possession, for example, “Nancy’s Tom.” Southern law consistently ruled that “the father of a slave is unknown to our law.” However, the male slave did occupy an important economic role: Men held almost all managerial positions open to slaves (Du Bois 1970; Dunaway 2003).

Equating Black Africans with slavery reinforced blackness as a race, an inferior race. This process of racial formation was introduced in Chapter 1. Racial formation is a sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed. The stigmatization of Black Africans during slavery and continuing after its end underscores how people socially construct race. So deeply constructed was this racial formation that it took generations before White people even began to question it.

The Attack on Slavery

Although the slave was vulnerable to his or her owner’s wishes, slavery as an institution was vulnerable to outside opinion. For a generation after the American Revolution, restrictions on slaves increased even as Southerners accepted slavery as permanent. Slave revolts and antislavery propaganda only accelerated the intensity of oppression the slaves endured. This increase in restrictions led to the ironic situation that as slavery was attacked from within and without, conditions for the slaves became harsher and its defenders became more outspoken in asserting what they saw as its benefits.

Antislavery advocates, or abolitionists, included Whites and free Blacks. Many Whites who opposed slavery, such as Abraham Lincoln, did not believe in racial equality. In their minds, even though slavery was a moral evil, racial equality was unimaginable. This inconsistency did not lessen the emotional fervor of the efforts to end slavery. Antislavery societies had been founded even before the American Revolution, but the Constitution dealt the antislavery movement a blow. To appease the South,
the framers of the Constitution recognized and legitimized slavery’s existence. The Constitution even allowed slavery to increase Southern political power. A slave was counted as three-fifths of a person in determining population representation in the House of Representatives.

Abolitionists, both Black and White, continued to speak out against slavery and the harm it was doing not only to the slaves but also to the entire nation, which had become economically dependent on bondage. Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth, both freed slaves, became very visible in the fight against slavery through their eloquent speeches and publications. Harriet Tubman, along with other Blacks and sympathetic Whites, developed the Underground Railroad to transport escaping slaves to freedom in the North and Canada (Franklin and Higginbotham 2011).

Another aspect of Black enslavement was the slaves’ own resistance to servitude. Slaves did revolt, and between 40,000 and 100,000 escaped from the South and slavery. Yet fugitive slave acts provided for the return of slaves even though they had reached free states. Enslaved Blacks who did not attempt escape, in part because failure often led to death, resisted slavery through such means as passive resistance. Slaves feigned clumsiness or illness; pretended not to understand, see, or hear; slaves ridiculed Whites with a mocking, subtle humor that their owners did not comprehend; and slaves destroyed farm implements and committed similar acts of sabotage. The most dramatic form of resistance was to flee enforced servitude by escaping through the Underground Railroad that linked safe houses and paths to freedom in the North and Canada (Kimmons 2008; Williams Jr. 2008).

Slavery’s Aftermath

On January 1, 1863, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. The document created hope in slaves in the South, but many Union soldiers resigned rather than participate in a struggle to free slaves. The proclamation freed slaves only in the Confederacy, over which the president had no control. Six months after the surrender of the Confederacy in 1865, abolition became law when the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery throughout the nation.

From 1867 to 1877, during the period called Reconstruction, Black–White relations in the South were unlike anything they had ever been. The Reconstruction Act of 1867 put each Southern state under a military governor until a new state constitution could be written, with Blacks participating fully in the process. Whites and Blacks married each other, went to public schools and state universities together, and rode side by side on trains and streetcars. The most conspicuous evidence of the new position of Blacks was their presence in elected office (Du Bois 1969b; Foner 2006).

Reconstruction was ended as part of a political compromise in the election of 1876; consequently, segregation became entrenched in the South. Evidence of Jim Crow’s reign was apparent by the close of the nineteenth century. The term Jim Crow has its origin in a dance tune, but by the 1890s it was synonymous with segregation and referred to statutes that kept African Americans in an inferior position. Segregation often preceded Jim Crow laws and in practice often went beyond their provisions. The institutionalization of segregation gave White supremacy its ultimate authority. In 1896, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that state laws requiring “separate but equal” accommodations for Blacks were a “reasonable” use of state government power (Cheng 2008; Woodward 1974).

It was in the political sphere that Jim Crow exacted its price soonest. In 1898, the Court’s decision in *Williams v. Mississippi* declared constitutional the use of poll
taxes, literacy tests, and residential requirements to discourage Blacks from voting. In Louisiana that year, 130,000 Blacks were registered to vote. Eight years later, the number dropped to only 1,342 were. When all these measures failed to deprive every African American the right to vote, White supremacists erected a final obstacle: the **White primary** that forbade Black voting in election primaries. By the turn of the century, the South had a one-party system, making the primary the significant contest and the general election a mere rubber stamp. Beginning with South Carolina in 1896 and spreading to 12 other states within 20 years, statewide Democratic Party primaries were adopted. The party explicitly excluded Blacks from voting, an exclusion that was constitutional because the party was defined as a private organization that was free to define its own membership qualifications. The White primary brought an end to the political gains of Reconstruction (Lacy 1972; Lewinson 1965; Woodward 1974).

**Reflecting on Slavery Today**

The legacy of slavery continues more than 150 years after its end in the United States. We can see it in the nation’s Capitol and the White House, which were built with slave labor, but we also can see it in the enduring poverty that grips a large proportion of the descendants of slavery.

Serious discussions have taken place for more than 30 years about granting reparations for slavery. **Slavery reparation** refers to the act of making amends for the injustice of slavery. Few people would argue that slavery was wrong and continues to be wrong where it is still practiced in parts of the world. However, what form should reparations take? Since 1989, Congressman John Conyers, a Black Democrat from Detroit, has annually introduced in Congress a bill to acknowledge the “fundamental injustice, cruelty, brutality, and inhumanity of slavery” and calls for the creation of a commission to examine the institution and to make recommendations on appropriate remedies. This bill has never made it out of committee, but the discussion continues outside the federal government. In 2009, Congress issued a joint resolution apologizing for slavery but it contained the specific “disclaimer” that nothing in the resolution authorized or supported any claim against the United States.

From every direction, the historical and social significance of slavery has been marginalized. Just prior to the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, various southern organizations and political leaders spoke of the need to not forget the Civil War and the bravery of the soldiers. However, many of the statements created a measure of controversy because they made no mention of slavery and suggested that the Confederacy was formed primarily because those states wanted the right to have more control over their affairs and not be subject to federal laws. In 2010, Virginia Governor Bob McDonnell designated April as Confederate History Month without mention of slavery. A 2011 national survey showed 25 percent of White people sympathize more with the Southern states than the Northern states looking back on the Civil War. Given the unease with which most people think of our nation’s history of slavery, it is no surprise that national recognition of the Sesquicentennial (150th anniversary) of the Civil War was limited to the issuance of commemorative postage stamps (Blow 2013; Seelye 2010).
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The Challenge of Black Leadership

The institutionalization of White supremacy precipitated different responses from African Americans, just as slavery had. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, several articulate Blacks attempted to lead the first generation of freeborn Black Americans. Most prominent were Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois. The personalities and ideas of these two men contrasted. Washington was born a slave in 1856 on a Virginia plantation. He worked in coal mines after emancipation and attended elementary school. Through hard work and driving ambition, Washington became the head of an educational institute for Blacks in Tuskegee, Alabama. Within 15 years, his leadership brought national recognition to the Tuskegee Institute and he became a national figure. Du Bois, on the other hand, was born in 1868 to a free family in Massachusetts. He attended Fisk University and the University of Berlin and became the first Black to receive a doctorate from Harvard. Washington died in 1915, and Du Bois died in self-imposed exile in Africa in 1963.

The Politics of Accommodation

Booker T. Washington’s approach to White supremacy is called the politics of accommodation. He was willing to forgo social equality until White people saw Blacks as deserving of it. Perhaps his most famous speech was made in Atlanta on September 18, 1895, to an audience that was mostly White and mostly wealthy. Introduced by the governor of Georgia as “a representative of Negro enterprise and Negro civilization,” Washington (1900) gave a five-minute speech in which he pledged the continued dedication of Blacks to Whites:

As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours. (P. 221)

The speech catapulted Washington into the public forum, and he became the anointed spokesperson for Blacks for the next 20 years. President Grover Cleveland congratulated Washington for the “new hope” he gave Blacks. Washington’s essential theme was compromise. Unlike Frederick Douglass, who had demanded the same rights for Blacks as for Whites, Washington asked that Blacks be educated because it would be a wise investment for Whites. He called racial hatred “the great and intricate problem which God has laid at the doors of the South.” The Blacks’ goal should be economic respectability. Washington’s accommodating attitude ensured his popularity with Whites. His recognition by Whites contributed to his large following of Blacks, who were not used to seeing their leaders achieve fame among Whites.

It is easy in retrospect to be critical of Washington and to write him off as simply a product of his times. Booker T. Washington entered the public arena when the more militant proposals of Douglass had been buried. Black politicians were losing political contests and influence. To become influential as a Black, Washington reasoned, required White acceptance. His image as an accommodator allowed him to fight discrimination covertly. He assisted Presidents Roosevelt and Taft in appointing Blacks to patronage positions. Washington’s goal was for African Americans eventually to have the same rights and opportunities as Whites. Just as people disagree with leaders today, some Blacks disagreed with the means Washington chose to reach that goal. No African American was more outspoken in his criticism of the politics of accommodation than W. E. B. Du Bois (Norrell 2009).
The rivalry between Washington and Du Bois has been exaggerated. They enjoyed fairly cordial relations for some time. In 1900, Washington recommended Du Bois, at his request, for superintendent of Black schools in Washington, DC. By 1905, however, relations between the two had cooled. Du Bois spoke critically of Washington’s influence, arguing that his power was being used to stifle African Americans who spoke out against the politics of accommodation. He also charged that Washington had caused the transfer of funds from academic programs to vocational education. Du Bois’s greatest objection to Washington’s statements was that they encouraged Whites to place the burden of the Blacks’ problems on the Blacks themselves (Du Bois 1903).

As an alternative to Washington’s program, Du Bois (1903) advocated the theory of the talented tenth, which reflected his atypical educational background. Unlike Washington, Du Bois was not at home with both intellectuals and sharecroppers. Although the very phrase talented tenth has an elitist ring, Du Bois argued that these privileged Blacks must serve the other nine-tenths. This argument was also Du Bois’s way of criticizing Washington’s emphasis on vocational education. Although he did not completely oppose the vocational approach, Du Bois thought education for African Americans should emphasize academics, which would be more likely to improve their position. Drawing on the talented tenth, Du Bois invited 29 Blacks to participate in a strategy session near Niagara Falls in 1905. Out of a series of meetings came several demands that unmistakably placed the responsibility for the problems facing African Americans on the shoulders of Whites.

The Niagara Movement, as it came to be called, was closely monitored by Booker T. Washington. Du Bois encountered difficulty gaining financial support and recruiting prominent people, and Du Bois (1968) himself wrote, “My leadership was solely of ideas. I never was, nor ever will be, personally popular” (p. 303). The movement’s legacy was educating a new generation of African Americans in the politics of protest. After 1910, the Niagara Movement ceased to hold annual conventions. In 1909, however, the Niagara Movement leaders founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), with White and Black members. It was through the work of the NAACP that the Niagara Movement accomplished most of the goals set forth in 1905. The NAACP also marked the merging of White liberalism and Black militancy, a coalition unknown since the end of the abolition movement and Reconstruction (Rudwick 1957; Wortham 2008).

Remarkably, as Du Bois agitated for social change, he continued to conduct groundbreaking research into race relations. He oversaw the Atlanta Sociological Laboratory; its work at the time was generally ignored by the White-dominated academic institutions but is now gradually being rediscovered (Wright 2006).

In 1900, 90 percent of African Americans lived in the South. Blacks moved out of the South and into the West and North, especially the urban areas in those regions, during the post–Civil War period and continued to migrate through the 1950s and 1960s. By the 1980s and 1990s, a return to the South began as job opportunities grew in that part of the country and most vestiges of Jim Crow vanished in what had been the Confederacy states. By 2010, 55 percent of African Americans lived in the South, compared to 33 percent of the rest of the population (Figure 6.1).

A pattern of violence, with Blacks usually the victims, started in the South during Reconstruction and continued into the twentieth century, when it also spread northward. In 1917, a riot in East St. Louis, Illinois, claimed the lives of 39 Blacks and nine Whites. The several days of violence resulted from White fear of social and economic gains made
by Blacks. So much violence occurred in the summer of 1919 that it is commonly called the “red summer.” Twenty-six riots broke out throughout the country as White soldiers who returned from World War I feared the new competition that Blacks represented. This period of violence against African Americans also saw a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, which at its height had nearly 9 million members (Berlin 2010; Grimshaw 1969; Schaefer 1971, 1980).

Reemergence of Black Protest

American involvement in World War II signaled improved economic conditions for both Whites and Blacks. Nearly a million African Americans served in the military in rigidly segregated units. Generally, more Blacks participated in the armed services in World War II than in previous military engagements, but efforts by Blacks to contribute to the war effort at home were hampered by discriminatory practices in defense plants.
A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, threatened to lead 100,000 Blacks in a march on Washington in 1941 to ensure their employment and not have Black workers targeted for dismissal. Randolph's proposed tactic was nonviolent direct action, which he modeled on Mahatma Gandhi's practices in India. Randolph made it clear that he intended the march to be an all-Black event because he saw it as neither necessary nor desirable for Whites to lead Blacks to their own liberation. President Franklin Roosevelt responded to the pressure and agreed to issue an executive order prohibiting discrimination if Randolph would call off the march. The order and the Fair Employment Practices Commission it set up did not fulfill the original promises, but a precedent had been established for federal intervention in job discrimination (Garfinkel 1959).

Racial turmoil during World War II was not limited to threatened marches. Racial disturbances occurred in cities throughout the country, the worst riot occurring in Detroit in June 1943. In that case, President Roosevelt sent in 6,000 soldiers to quell the violence, which left 25 Blacks and nine Whites dead. The racial disorders were paralleled by a growth in civil disobedience as a means to achieve equality for Blacks. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded in 1942 to fight discrimination with nonviolent direct action. This interracial group used sit-ins to open restaurants to Black patrons in Chicago, Baltimore, and Los Angeles (Grimshaw 1969).

The war years and the postwar period saw several U.S. Supreme Court decisions that suggested the Court was moving away from tolerating racial inequities. The White primary elections endorsed in Jim Crow's formative period were finally challenged in the 1944 Smith v. Allwright decision. The effectiveness of the victory was limited; many states simply passed statutes that used new devices to frustrate African American voters.

A particularly repugnant legal device for relegating African Americans to second-class status was the restrictive covenant, a private contract entered into by neighborhood property owners stipulating that property could not be sold or rented to certain minority groups, thus ensuring that they could not live in the area. In 1948, the Supreme Court finally declared in Shelley v. Kraemer that restrictive covenants were not constitutional, although it did not actually attack their discriminatory nature. The victory was in many ways less substantial than it was symbolic of the new willingness by the Supreme Court to uphold the rights of Black citizens.

The Democratic administrations of the late 1940s and early 1950s made a number of promises to Black Americans. The party adopted a strong civil rights platform in 1948, but its provisions were not enacted. Once again, union president Randolph threatened Washington, DC, with a march. This time, he insisted that as long as Blacks were subjected to a peacetime draft, the military must be desegregated. President Truman responded by issuing an executive order on July 26, 1948, that desegregated the armed forces. The U.S. Army abolished its quota system in 1950, and training camps for the Korean War were integrated. Desegregation was not complete, however, especially in the reserves and the National Guard, and even today the armed forces face challenges in ensuring full equality for all service members.
forces face charges of racial favoritism. Whatever its shortcomings, the desegregation order offered African Americans an alternative to segregated civilian life (Moskos and Butler 1996).

The Civil Rights Movement

It is difficult to say exactly when a social movement begins or ends. Usually, a movement’s ideas or tactics precede the actual mobilization of people and continue long after the movement’s driving force has been replaced by new ideals and techniques. This description applies to the civil rights movement and its successor: the continuing struggle for African American freedom. Before 1954, there were some confrontations of White supremacy: the CORE sit-ins of 1942 and efforts to desegregate buses in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in 1953. The civil rights movement gained momentum with a Supreme Court decision in 1954 that eventually desegregated the public schools, and it ended as a major force in Black America with the civil disorders of 1965 through 1968. However, beginning in 1954, toppling the traditional barriers to full rights for Blacks was the rule, not the exception.

Struggle to Desegregate the Schools

For the majority of Black children, public school education meant attending segregated schools. Southern school districts assigned children to school by race rather than by neighborhood, a practice that constituted de jure segregation, or segregation that results from children being assigned to schools specifically to maintain racially separate schools. It was this form of legal humiliation that was attacked in the landmark decree of Linda Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas.

Seven-year-old Linda Brown was not permitted to enroll in the grade school four blocks from her home in Topeka, Kansas. Rather, school board policy dictated that she attend the Black school almost two miles away. This denial led the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund to bring suit on behalf of Linda Brown and 12 other Black children. The NAACP argued that the Fourteenth Amendment was intended to rule out segregation in public schools. Chief Justice Earl Warren of the Supreme Court wrote the unanimous opinion that “in the field of public education the doctrine of ‘separate but equal’ has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal.”

The freedom that African Americans saw in their grasp at the time of the Brown decision amounted to a reaffirmation of American values. What Blacks sought was assimilation into White American society. The motivation for the Brown suit did not come merely because Black schools were inferior, although they were. Blacks were assigned to poorly ventilated and dilapidated buildings, with overcrowded classrooms and unqualified teachers. Less money was spent on Black schools than on White schools throughout the South in both rural and metropolitan areas. The issue was not such tangible factors, however, but the intangible effect of not being allowed to go to school with Whites. All-Black schools could not be equal to all-White schools. Even in this victory, Blacks reaffirmed White society and the importance of an integrated educational experience (Supreme Court of the United States 347 U.S. 483, August 17, 1954).

Although Brown marked the beginning of the civil rights movement, the reaction to it showed how deeply prejudice was rooted in the South. Resistance to court-ordered desegregation took many forms: Some people called for impeachment of all the Supreme Court justices. Others petitioned Congress to declare the Fourteenth Amendment unconstitutional.
Cities closed schools rather than comply. The governor of Arkansas used the state’s National Guard to block Black students from entering a previously all-White high school in Little Rock (Figure 6.2).

The issue of school desegregation was extended to higher education, and Mississippi state troopers and the state’s National Guard confronted each other over the 1962 admission of James Meredith, the first African American accepted by the University of Mississippi. Scores of people were injured and two were killed in this clash between segregationists and the law. A similar defiant stand was taken a year later by Governor George Wallace, who “stood in the schoolhouse door” to block two Blacks from enrolling in the University of Alabama. President Kennedy federalized the Alabama National Guard to guarantee admission of the students. Brown did not resolve the school controversy, and many questions remain unanswered. More recently, the issue of school segregation resulting from neighborhood segregation has been debated. Later, another form of segregation—de facto segregation—is examined more closely (Bell 2004, 2007; Pettigrew 2011).

Civil Disobedience

The success of a yearlong boycott of city buses in Montgomery, Alabama, dealt Jim Crow another setback. On December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks defied the law and refused to give her seat on a crowded bus to a White man. Her defiance led to the organization of the Montgomery Improvement Association, headed by 26-year-old Martin Luther King, Jr., a Baptist minister with a PhD from Boston University. The bus boycott was the first of many situations in which Blacks used nonviolent direct action to obtain the rights that Whites already enjoyed. The
boycott eventually demanded the end of segregated seating. The *Brown* decision woke up all of America to racial injustice, but the Montgomery boycott marked a significant shift away from the historical reliance on NAACP court battles (Killian 1975).

**Civil disobedience** is based on the belief that people have the right to disobey the law under certain circumstances. This tactic was not new; Blacks in the United States had used it before and Gandhi also had urged its use in India. Under King’s leadership, however, civil disobedience became a widely used technique and even gained a measure of acceptability among some prominent Whites. King distinguished between man-made laws that were unjust and should not be obeyed because they were not right, not in accordance with God’s higher moral code (1963:82).

In disobeying unjust laws, King (1958: 101–107) developed this strategy:

- actively but nonviolently resisting evil,
- not seeking to defeat or humiliate opponents but to win their friendship and understanding,
- attacking the forces of evil rather than the people who happen to be doing the evil,
- being willing to accept suffering without retaliating,
- refusing to hate the opponent, and
- acting with the conviction that the universe is on the side of justice.

King, like other Blacks before him and since, made it clear that passive acceptance of injustice was intolerable. He hoped that by emphasizing nonviolence, Southern Blacks would display their hostility to racism in a way that would undercut violent reaction by Whites.

Congress had still failed to enact any sweeping federal barrier to discrimination. Following the example of A. Philip Randolph in 1941, Blacks organized the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963. With more than 200,000 people participating, the march was the high point of the civil rights movement. The mass of people, middle-class Whites and Blacks looking to the federal government for support, symbolized the struggle. However, a public opinion poll conducted shortly before the march documented the continuing resentment of the majority of Whites: 63 percent were opposed to the rally (G. Gallup 1972).

King (1971:351) delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech before the large crowd; he looked forward to a time when all Americans will be able to unite together. Just eighteen days later, a bomb exploded in a Black church in Birmingham, Alabama, killing four little girls and injuring twenty other people.

Despair only increased as the November 1963 election results meant segregationists were successful in their bids for office. Most distressing was the assassination of President Kennedy on November 22. Blacks had found Kennedy to be an appealing president despite his previously mediocre legislative record in the U.S. Senate. His death left doubt as to the direction and pace of future actions on civil rights by the executive branch under President Lyndon Baines Johnson. Two months later, however, the...
Twenty-Fourth Amendment was ratified, outlawing the poll tax that had long prevented Blacks from voting. The enactment of the Civil Rights Act on July 2, 1964, was hailed as a major victory and provided, at least for awhile, what historian John Hope Franklin called “the illusion of equality” (Franklin and Higginbotham 2011).

In the months that followed passage of the act, the pace of the movement to end racial injustice slowed. The violence continued, however, from the Bedford–Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn to Selma, Alabama. Southern state courts still found White murderers of Blacks innocent, and they had to be tried and convicted in federal, rather than criminal, court on the charge that by killing a person one violates that person’s civil rights. Government records, which did not become public until 1973, revealed a systematic campaign by the FBI to infiltrate civil rights groups in an effort to discredit them in the belief that such activist groups were subversive. It was in such an atmosphere that the Voting Rights Act was passed in August 1965, but this significant, positive event was somewhat overshadowed by violence in the Watts section of Los Angeles that same week (Blackstock 1976).

Urban Violence and Oppression

Riots involving Whites and Blacks did not begin in the 1960s. As noted earlier in this chapter, urban violence occurred after World War I and even during World War II, and violence against Blacks in the United States is nearly 350 years old. But the urban riots of the 1960s affected Blacks and Whites in the United States and throughout the world so extensively that they deserve special attention. However, it is important to remember that most violence between Whites and Blacks has not been large-scale collective action but has involved only a small number of people.

The summers of 1963 and 1964 were a prelude to riots that gripped the country’s attention. Although most people knew of the civil rights efforts in the South and legislative victories in Washington, everyone realized that the racial problem was national after several cities outside the South experienced violent disorder. In April 1968, after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., more cities exploded than had in all of 1967. Even before the summer of 1968 began, there were 369 civil disorders. Communities of all sizes were hit (Oberschall 1968).

As the violence continued and embraced many ghettos, a popular explanation was that riot participants were mostly unemployed youths who had criminal records, often involving narcotics, and who were vastly outnumbered by the African Americans who repudiated the looting and arson. This explanation was called the riff-raff theory or the rotten-apple theory because it discredited the rioters and left the barrel of apples, White society, untouched. On the contrary, research shows that the Black community expressed sympathetic understanding toward the rioters and that the rioters were not merely the poor and uneducated but included middle-class, working-class, and educated residents (Sears and McConahay 1969, 1973; Tomlinson 1969; R. Turner 1994).

Several alternatives to the riff-raff theory explain why Black violent protest increased in the United States at a time when the nation was seemingly committed to civil rights for all. Two explanations stand out. One ascribes the problem to Black frustration with rising expectations in the face of continued deprivation relative to Whites.

The standard of living of African Americans improved remarkably after World War II, and it continued to do so during the civil rights movement. However, White income and occupation levels also improved, so the gap between the groups remained. Chapter 3 showed that feelings of relative deprivation often are the basis for perceived discrimination. Relative deprivation is the conscious feeling of a negative discrepancy between legitimate expectations and current actualities (W. Wilson 1973).
At the same time that African Americans were feeling relative deprivation, they also were experiencing growing discontent. Rising expectations refers to the increasing sense of frustration that legitimate needs are being blocked. Blacks felt that they had legitimate aspirations to equality, and the civil rights movement reaffirmed that discrimination had blocked upward mobility. As the horizons of African Americans broadened, they were more likely to make comparisons with Whites and feel discontented. The civil rights movement resulted in higher aspirations for Black America; yet for the majority, life remained unchanged. Not only were their lives unchanged but they also had a widespread feeling that the existing social structure held no prospect for improvement (Garner 1996; Sears and McConahay 1970; Thomas and Thomas 1984).

Black Power

The riots in the Northern ghettos captured the attention of Whites, and Black Power was what they heard. But Black Power was born not of Black but of White violence. On June 6, 1966, James Meredith was carrying out a one-person march from Memphis to Jackson, Mississippi, to encourage fellow African Americans to overcome their own fears and vote after the passage of the Voting Rights Act. During that march, an unidentified assailant shot and wounded Meredith. Blacks from throughout the country immediately continued the march. During the march, Stokely Carmichael of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee proclaimed to a cheering Black crowd, “What we need is Black Power.” King and others later urged “Freedom Now” as the slogan for the march. A compromise dictated that no slogan would be used, but the mood of Black America said otherwise (King 1967; Lomax 1971).

In retrospect, it may be puzzling that the phrase Black Power frightened Whites and offended so many Blacks. It was not really new. The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968) correctly identified it as old wine in new bottles: Black consciousness was not new, even if the phrase was.

By advocating Black Power, Carmichael distanced himself from the assimilationism of King. Carmichael rejected the goal of assimilation into White middle-class society. Instead, he said, Blacks must create new institutions. To succeed in this endeavor, Carmichael argued that Blacks must follow the same path as the Italians, Irish, and other White ethnic groups. “Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks... Group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society” (Ture and Hamilton 1992:44). Prominent Black leaders opposed the concept; many feared that Whites would retaliate even more violently. King (1967) saw Black Power as a “cry of disappointment” but acknowledged that it had a “positive meaning.”

Eventually, Black Power gained wide acceptance among Blacks and even many Whites. Although it came to be defined differently by nearly every new proponent,
support of Black Power generally implied endorsing Black control of the political, economic, and social institutions in Black communities. One reason for its popularity among African Americans was that it gave them a viable option for surviving in a segregated society. The civil rights movement strove to end segregation, but the White response showed how committed White society was to maintaining it. Black Power presented restructuring society as the priority item on the Black agenda (Carmichael and Thelwell 2003).

In the wake of generations of struggle by African Americans allied with sympathetic Whites and members of other minority groups, we now consider how much progress has been made in such areas as education, the economy, family life, housing, criminal justice, healthcare, and politics.

**Education**

The African American population in the United States has placed special importance on acquiring education, beginning with its emphasis in the home of the slave family, even when the formal institution of marriage was prohibited, and continuing through the creation of separate schools for Black children because public schools were closed to them by custom or law. Today, long after the civil rights coalition has disbanded, education remains a controversial issue. Because racial and ethnic groups realize that formal schooling is the key to social mobility, they want to maximize this opportunity for upward mobility and, therefore, want better schooling. White Americans also appreciate the value of formal schooling and do not want to do anything that they perceive will jeopardize their own position.

Several measures document the inadequate education received by African Americans, starting with the quantity of formal education. Blacks as a group have always attained less education than Whites as a group. Despite programs such as Head Start, which are directed at all poor children, White children are still more likely to have formal prekindergarten education than are African American children. Later, Black children generally drop out of school sooner and, therefore, are less likely to receive high school diplomas, let alone college degrees. The gap in receiving college degrees has not been reduced in recent years, as shown in Figure 6.3. Presently, about 31 percent of non-Hispanic Whites 25 years and over have a bachelor’s degree or higher compared to fewer than 18 percent.

![Figure 6.3](image_url)

**FIGURE 6.3**

Percentage of Adults Receiving College Degrees

Blacks have made tremendous progress in terms of receiving college degrees, but so have Whites. Today’s level of college completion among adult African Americans is about the level White Americans reached in the mid-1980s.

*Note: Date since 2000 for non-Hispanic Whites. Proportion of population over age 25.*

*Source: Bureau of the Census 2010a: Table 145; 2011e.*
of African Americans, who have fewer degrees than Ecuadorian Americans or Nicaraguan Americans. Despite this progress, however, the gap remains substantial, with the proportion of Blacks holding a college degree in 2010 about what it was for Whites in the early 1980s (Ogunwole, Drewery, and Rios-Vargas 2012).

Proposals to improve educational opportunities often argue for more adequate funding. Yet, there are disagreements over what changes would lead to the best outcome. For example, educators and African Americans in general have significant debates over the content of curriculum that is best for minority students. Some schools have developed academic programs that take an Afrocentric perspective and immerse students in African American history and culture. However, a few of these programs have been targeted as ignoring fundamentals. On other occasions, the Afrocentric curriculum has even been viewed as racist against Whites. The debates over a few controversial programs attract a lot of attention, clouding the widespread need to reassess the curriculum for racial and ethnic minorities.

Middle- and upper-class children occasionally face barriers to a high-quality education, but they are more likely than the poor to have a home environment that is favorable to learning. Even African American schoolchildren who stay in school are not guaranteed equal opportunities in life. Many high schools do not prepare students who are interested in college for advanced schooling. The problem is that schools are failing to meet the needs of students, not that students are failing in school. Therefore, the problems with schooling were properly noted as a part of the past discrimination component of total discrimination illustrated in Figure 3.1 on page 000.

School Segregation

It has been more than 50 years since the U.S. Supreme Court issued its unanimous ruling in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas that separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. What has been the legacy of that decision? Initially, the courts, with the support of the federal government, ordered Southern school districts to end racial separation. But as attention turned to larger school districts, especially in the North, the challenge was to have integrated schools even though the neighborhoods were segregated. In addition, some city school districts were predominantly African American and Hispanic and were surrounded by suburban school districts that were predominantly White. This type of school segregation, which results from residential patterns, is called de facto segregation.

Initially, courts sought to overcome de facto segregation just as they had de jure school segregation in the Brown case. Typically, students were bused within a school district to achieve racial balance, but in a few cases, Black students were bused to predominantly White suburban schools and White children were bused into the city. In 1974, however, the Supreme Court ruled in Millikin v. Bradley that it was improper to order Detroit and the suburbs to have a joint metropolitan busing solution. These and other Supreme Court decisions effectively ended initiatives to overcome residential segregation, once again creating racial isolation in the schools. Indeed, even in Topeka, one-third of the schools are segregated (Orfield et al. 1996).

School segregation has been so enduring that the term apartheid schools has been coined to refer to schools that are all Black. An analysis released in 2003 by the Civil Rights Project of Harvard University documented that one in six of the nation’s Black students attends an apartheid school, and this proportion rose to one out of four in the Northeast and Midwest. If there has been any trend, it is that the typical African American student was less likely to have White classmates in 2010 than in 1970 (Frankenberg et al. 2003; Tefera et al. 2010).

Although studies have shown positive effects of integration, a diverse student population does not guarantee an integrated, equal schooling environment. For example, tracking in schools, especially middle and high schools, intensifies segregation at the classroom level.
Tracking is the practice of placing students in specific curriculum groups on the basis of test scores and other criteria. It also has the effect of decreasing White–Black classroom interaction because African American children are disproportionately assigned to general classes, and more White children are placed in college-preparatory classes. For example, in 2009, at an elementary school in suburban Montgomery County, Maryland, the school’s faculty, which is nearly 75 percent White, identified the percentage of the student body, which is about 64 percent White, likely to be considered “gifted and talented”: Forty-nine percent of White students and 67 percent of Asian students were so identified, compared to fewer than 8 percent of Latino students and fewer than 4 percent of African American children. Studies indicate that African American students are more likely than White students to be classified as learning disabled or emotionally disturbed. Although there are successes in public education, integration is not one of them (Ellison 2008; K. Thompson 2010).

**Higher Education**

Higher education for Blacks reflects the same pattern: The overall picture of African American higher education is not promising. Although strides were made in the period after the civil rights movement, a plateau was reached in the mid-1970s. African Americans are more likely than Whites to be part-time students and to need financial aid, which began to be severely cut in the 1980s. They also are finding the social climate on predominantly White campuses less than positive. As a result, the historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) are once again playing a significant role in educating African Americans. For a century, they were the only real source of college degrees for Blacks. Then, in the 1970s, predominantly White colleges began to recruit African Americans. As of 2010, however, the 105 HBCUs still accounted for about one-fifth of all Black college graduates (National Center for Educational Statistics 2011: Tables 250, 297).

As shown in Figure 6.3, although African Americans are more likely today to be college graduates, the upward trend in the 1970s and 1980s has moderated. Several factors account for this reversal in progress:

1. Reductions in financial aid and more reliance on loans than on grants-in-aid, coupled with rising costs, have discouraged students who would be the first members of their families to attend college.

2. Pushing for higher standards in educational achievement without providing remedial courses has locked out many minority students.

3. Employment opportunities, though slight for African Americans without some college, have continued to lure young people who must contribute to their family’s income and who otherwise might have gone to college.

4. Negative publicity about affirmative action may have discouraged some African Americans from even considering college.

5. Attention to what appears to be a growing number of racial incidents on predominantly White college campuses also has been a discouraging factor.

Colleges and universities seem uneasy about these problems; publicly, the schools appear committed to addressing them. There is little question that special challenges face the African American student at a college with an overwhelmingly White student body, faculty, advisors, coaches, and administrators. The campus culture may be neutral at best, and it is often hostile to members of racial minorities. The high attrition rate of African American students on predominantly White college campuses confirms the need for a positive environment.
The disparity in schooling becomes even more pronounced at the highest levels, and the gap is not closing. Only 6.1 percent of all doctorates awarded in 2008 were to native-born African Americans, reflecting a modest increase from 3.9 percent in 1981 (Bureau of the Census 2010a: Table 296).

In summary, the picture of education for Black Americans is uneven—marked progress in absolute terms (much better educated than a generation ago), but relative to Whites, the gap in educational attainment remains at all levels. Sixty years ago, the major issue appeared to be school desegregation, but the goal was to improve the quality of education received by Black schoolchildren. Today, the concerns of African American parents and most educators are similar—quality education. W. E. B. Du Bois advanced the same point in 1935—what a Black student needs “is neither segregated schools nor mixed schools. What he needs is Education” (p. 335).

The Economic Picture

The general economic picture for African Americans has gradually improved over the last 50 years, but this improvement is modest compared with that of Whites, whose standard of living also has increased. Therefore, in terms of absolute deprivation, African Americans are much better off today but have not experienced significant improvement with respect to their deprivation relative to Whites on almost all economic indicators. To better understand today’s economic reality, we first focus on the middle class and then turn to a broader overview of the occupations that African American fill.

The Middle Class

Many characterizations of the African American community have been attacked because they overemphasize the poorest segment of that community. Also overemphasized and exaggerated is how much success African Americans have achieved. Social scientists face the challenge of avoiding a selective, one-sided picture of Black society. The problem is similar to viewing a partially filled glass of water. Does one describe it as half empty and emphasize the need for assistance? Or does one describe the glass as half full to give attention to what has been accomplished? The most complete description acknowledges both perspectives.

A clearly defined African American middle class has emerged. In 2011, about 21 percent of African Americans earned more than the median income for White non-Hispanics. At least one-quarter of Blacks, then, are middle class or higher. Many observers have debated the character of this middle class. E. Franklin Frazier (1957), a Black sociologist, wrote an often-critical study of the African American middle class in which he identified its overriding goal as achieving petty social values and becoming acceptable to white society (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, and Smith. 2012: Table PINC-03).

Directing attention to the Black middle class also requires that we consider the relative importance of race and social class. The degree to which affluent Blacks identify themselves in class terms or racial terms is an important ideological question. W. E. B. Du Bois (1952) argued that when racism decreases, class issues become more important. As Du Bois saw it, exploitation would remain, and many of the same people would continue to be subordinate. Black elites might become economically successful, either as entrepreneurs (Black capitalists) or professionals (Black white-collar workers), but they would continue to identify with and serve the dominant group’s interest.

Social scientists have long recognized the importance of class. Class is a term used by sociologist Max Weber to refer to people who share a similar level of wealth and income. The significance of class in people’s lives is apparent to all. This is not just in terms of
the type of cars one drives or where one goes on vacation but also in the quality of public schools available and the healthcare one receives.

Besides class, two measures are useful to determine the overall economic situation of an individual or household: income and wealth. Income refers to salaries, wages, and other money received; wealth is a more inclusive term that encompasses all of a person’s material assets, including land and other types of property. The Research Focus box, “Moving on Up, or Not,” considers how African Americans are doing in terms of income and wealth.

Moving on Up, or Not

MOVING ON UP
Harvard political scientist Jennifer Hochschild (1995, 44) observed that, “One has not really succeeded in America unless one can pass on the chance for success to one’s children.” By this standard, how well is the Black American community doing?

To begin with, relative to White Americans, Blacks have much less income and wealth. According to a report released in 2012, the proportion of Blacks and Whites rising to the top and falling to (or starting from) the bottom of the income and wealth ladders differs dramatically. Just over two-thirds (65 percent) of Blacks grew up at the bottom of the income ladder compared with only 11 percent of Whites. In Table 6.1, we look at income and wealth spread across quartiles or fifths of the entire population. Clearly, Blacks are clustered toward the bottom quartile, while almost half of the Whites are in the top two-fifths. The same pattern exists for family wealth: 57 percent of blacks grew up at the bottom compared to only 14 percent of Whites. At the other end of the income and wealth pyramid, almost one-quarter (23 percent) of Whites were raised at the top versus only 2 percent of Blacks.

How do African Americans fare on matching or even enjoying greater economic success than their parents?

Admittedly, the current economic times are tough for all households, but even considering that, Blacks are less likely to rise above their parents’ typically modest circumstances.

Black children are much less likely to end up in the middle class than White children. Not only is this true for the ones who grow up in poverty but also for those whose parents have made it to the middle class.

Only 23 percent of Blacks raised in the middle class exceed their parents’ wealth, compared with 56 percent of Whites. Only at the very bottom do a majority of Blacks surpass their parents’ wealth, but even there, White people below the poverty level do much better.

The American dream of upward mobility, while not being carried out as successfully by Black Americans, is certainly embraced by them. While only 52 percent of Whites believe their economic circumstances will be better in ten years, 73 percent of Blacks foresee improved personal finances ahead.


TABLE 6.1
Percentage of Americans Raised in Each Quintile, by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Family Income</th>
<th>Family Wealth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised in Top Quintile</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised in Fourth Quintile</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised in Middle Quintile</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised in Second Quintile</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised in Bottom Quintile</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Numbers in each column may not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.
Source: Economic Mobility Project 2012: 18.
The complexity of the relative influence of race, income, and wealth was apparent in the controversy surrounding the publication of sociologist William J. Wilson’s *The Declining Significance of Race* (1980). Pointing to the increasing affluence of African Americans, Wilson concluded, “...class has become more important than race in determining black life-chances in the modern world” (p. 150). The policy implications of his conclusion are that programs must be developed to confront class subordination rather than ethnic and racial discrimination. Wilson did not deny the legacy of discrimination reflected in the disproportionate number of African Americans who are poor, less educated, and living in inadequate and overcrowded housing. However, he pointed to “compelling evidence” that young Blacks were competing successfully with young Whites.

Early critics of Wilson commented that focusing attention on this small, educated elite ignores vast numbers of African Americans relegated to the lower class (Pinkney 1984; Willie 1978, 1979). Wilson himself was not guilty of such an oversimplification and indeed expressed concern over the plight of lower-class, inner-city African Americans as they seemingly fall even further behind. He pointed out that the poor are socially isolated and have shrinking economic opportunities (2011). However, it is easy for many people to conclude superficially that because educated Blacks are entering the middle class, race has ceased to be of concern.

**Employment**

This precarious situation for African Americans—the lack of dependable assets—is particularly relevant as we consider their employment picture. Higher unemployment rates for Blacks have persisted since the 1940s, when they were first documented. Even in the best economic times, the Black unemployment rate is still significantly higher than it is for Whites. In 2012, as the United States tried to emerge from a long recession, the Black unemployment rate stood at 14.4 percent compared to 7.0 percent for Whites. Considerable evidence exists that Blacks are the first fired as the business cycle weakens.

The employment picture is especially grim for African American workers aged 16 to 24. During the height of the recent recession, for Black youth aged 16–19, unemployment in 2012 hit just over 39 percent—equivalent to the national unemployment rate during the darkest period of the Great Depression (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012b; Couch and Fairlie 2010).

Social scientists have cited many factors to explain why official unemployment rates for young African Americans are so high:

- Many African Americans live in the depressed economy of the central cities.
- Immigrants and illegal aliens present increased competition.
- White middle-class women have entered the labor force.
- Illegal activities whereby youths can make more money are increasingly prevalent.

None of these factors is likely to change soon, so depression-like levels of unemployment probably will persist (Haynes 2009).

The picture grows even more somber because we are considering only official unemployment. The federal government’s Bureau of Labor Statistics counts as unemployed people only those who are actively seeking employment. Therefore, to be officially unemployed, a person must not hold a full-time job, must be registered with a government employment agency, and must be engaged in submitting job applications and seeking interviews. The official unemployment rate leaves out millions of Americans, Black and White, who are effectively unemployed. It does not count people who are so discouraged they have temporarily given up looking for employment. The problem of unemployment is further compounded by **underemployment**, or working at a job for
which one is overqualified, involuntarily working part-time instead of full-time, or being employed only intermittently.

Although a few African Americans have crashed through the glass ceiling and made it into the top echelons of business or government, more have entered a wider variety of jobs. As shown in Table 6.2, African Americans, who constitute 12.4 percent of the population, are underrepresented in high-status, high-paying occupations. The taboo against putting Blacks in jobs in which they would supervise Whites has weakened, and the percentage of African Americans in professional and managerial occupations has shown remarkable improvement. However, much improvement can still be made.

### Family Life

In its role as a social institution providing for the socialization of children, the family is crucial to its members’ life satisfaction. The family also reflects the influence, positive or negative, of income, housing, education, and other social factors. For African Americans, the family reflects both amazing stability and the legacy of racism and low income across many generations.

### Challenges to Family Stability

More than one-third of African American children had both a father and a mother present in 2009 (see Figure 6.4). Although single-parent African American families are common, they are not universal. In comparison, such single-parent arrangements were also present in about one in five White families.

It is just as inaccurate to assume that a single-parent family is necessarily deprived as it is to assume that a two-parent family is always secure and happy. Nevertheless, life in a single-parent family can be extremely stressful for all single parents and their children, not just those who are members of subordinate groups. Because the absent parent is more often the father, the lack of a male presence almost always means the lack of a male income. This monetary impact on a single-parent household cannot be overstated.

---

**TABLE 6.2**

Percentages of African American Employees in Selected Occupations, 1982–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lawyers and judges</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physicians</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered nurses</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College professors</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Librarians</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social workers</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales workers</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>16.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and detectives</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For many single African American women living in poverty, having a child is an added burden. However, the tradition of extended family among African Americans eases this burden somewhat. The absence of a husband does not mean that no one shares in childcare: out-of-wedlock children born to Black teenage mothers often live with their grandparents and form three-generation households.

No single explanation accounts for the rise in single-parent households. Sociologists attribute the rapid expansion in the number of such households primarily to shifts in the economy that have kept Black men, especially in urban areas, out of work. The phenomenon certainly is not limited to African Americans. Increasingly, both White and Black unmarried women bear children. More and more parents, both White and Black, divorce, so even children born into a two-parent family might end up living with only one parent.

Strengths of African American Families

In the midst of ever-increasing single parenting, another picture of African American family life becomes visible: success despite discrimination and economic hardship. Robert Hill (1999), of the National Urban League and Morgan State University, listed the following five strengths of African American families that allow them to function effectively in a hostile (racist) society.

1. **Strong kinship bonds**: Blacks are more likely than Whites to care for children and the elderly in an extended family network.

2. **A strong work orientation**: Poor Blacks are more likely to be working, and poor Black families often include more than one wage earner.

3. **Adaptability of family roles**: In two-parent families, an egalitarian pattern of decision making is the most common. The self-reliance of Black women who are the primary wage earners best illustrates this adaptability.
4. **Strong achievement orientation:** Working-class Blacks indicate a greater desire for their children to attend college than do working-class Whites. A majority of low-income African American children want to attend college.

5. **A strong religious orientation:** Since the time of slavery, Black churches have been the impetus behind many significant grassroots organizations.

Social workers and sociologists have confirmed through social research the strengths that Hill noted first in 1972. In the African American community, these are the sources of family strength (Hudgins 1992).

Increasingly, social scientists are looking at both the weaknesses and the strengths of African American family life. Expressions of alarm about instability date back to 1965, when the Department of Labor issued the report *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. The document, commonly known as the Moynihan Report, after its principal author, sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan, outlined a “tangle of pathology” with the Black family at its core. More recently, two studies—the Stable Black Families Project and the National Survey of Black Americans—sought to learn how Black families encounter problems and resolve them successfully with internal resources such as those that Hill outlined in his highly regarded work (Department of Labor 1965; Massey and Sampson 2009).

The most consistently documented strength of African American families is the presence of an extended family household. The most common feature is having grandparents residing in the home. Extended living arrangements are much more common among Black households than among White ones. These arrangements are recognized as having the important economic benefit of pooling limited economic resources. Because of the generally lower earnings of African American heads of household, income from second, third, and even fourth wage earners is needed to achieve a desired standard of living or, in all too many cases, simply to meet daily needs (Haxton and Harknett 2009).

**Housing**

Housing plays a major role in determining the quality of a person’s life. For African Americans, as for Whites, housing is the result of personal preferences and income. However, African Americans differ from Whites because their housing has been restricted through discrimination, which has not been the case for Whites. We devote significant attention to housing because, for most people, housing is critical to their quality of life and often represents their largest single asset.

Although Black housing has improved—as indicated by statistics on home ownership, new construction, density of living units, and quality as measured by plumbing facilities—African Americans remain behind Whites on all these standards. The quality of Black housing is inferior to that of Whites at all income levels, yet Blacks pay a larger proportion of their income for shelter.

Typically in the United States, as noted, White children attend predominantly White schools, Black children attend predominantly Black schools, and Hispanic children attend predominantly Hispanic schools. This school segregation is not only the result of the failure to accept busing but also the effect of residential segregation. In their studies on segregation, Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton (1993) concluded that racial separation “continues to exist because white America has not had the political will or desire to dismantle it” (p. 8). In Chapter 1, we noted the pervasiveness of residential segregation as reflected in the most recent analysis of housing patterns (refer back to Table 1.2). Racial isolation in neighborhoods has only improved modestly over the last two generations.
What factors create residential segregation in the United States? Among the primary factors are the following:

- Because of private prejudice and discrimination, people refuse to sell or rent to people of the “wrong” race, ethnicity, or religion.
- The prejudicial policies of real estate companies steer people to the “correct” neighborhoods.
- Government policies do not effectively enforce anti-bias legislation.
- Public housing policies today, as well as past construction patterns, reinforce locating housing for the poor in inner-city neighborhoods.
- Policies of banks and other lenders create barriers based on race to financing home purchasing.

The issue of racial-based financing deserves further explanation. In the 1990s, new attention was focused on the persistence of redlining, the practice of discriminating against people trying to buy homes in minority and racially changing neighborhoods.

It is important to recall the implications of this discrimination in home financing for the African American community. Earlier in the chapter, we noted the great disparity between Black and White family wealth and the implications of this for the present and future generations. The key factor in this inequality was the failure of African Americans to accumulate wealth through home buying.

A dual housing market is part of today’s reality, although attacks continue against the remaining legal barriers to fair housing. In theory, zoning laws are enacted to ensure that specific standards of housing construction will be satisfied. These regulations can also separate industrial and commercial enterprises from residential areas. However, some zoning laws in suburbs have curbed the development of low- and moderate-income housing that would attract African Americans who want to move out of the central cities.

For years, constructing low-income public housing in the ghetto has furthered racial segregation. The courts have not ruled consistently in this matter in recent years so, as with affirmative action, public officials lack clear guidance. Even if court decisions continue to dismantle exclusionary housing practices, the rapid growth of integrated neighborhoods is unlikely. In the future, African American housing probably will continue to improve and remain primarily in all-Black neighborhoods. This gap is greater than can be explained by differences in social class.

**Criminal Justice**

A complex, sensitive topic affecting African Americans is their role in criminal justice. It was reported in 2012 that Blacks constitute 4.3 percent of all lawyers, 12.1 percent of police officers, 10.6 percent of detectives, and 28.8 percent of security guards but 39 percent of jail and prison inmates.

Data collected annually in the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report show that Blacks account for 28 percent of arrests, even though they represent only about 12 percent of the nation’s population. Conflict theorists point out that the higher arrest rate is not surprising for a group that is disproportionately poor and, therefore, much less able to afford private attorneys, who might be able to prevent formal arrests from taking place. Even more significantly, the Uniform Crime Report focuses on index crimes (mainly property crimes), which are the type of crimes most often committed by low-income people.

These numbers are staggering but, as dramatic as they are, it is not unusual to hear exaggerations presented as facts, such as “more Black men are in prison than in college.” The reality is sobering enough—581,000 in prison compared to 2,584,000 in college.
About one in 16 White males can expect to go to a state or federal prison during his lifetime, yet for Black males, this lifetime probability is one out of three (Carson and Sabol 2012: Table 7; National Center for Educational Statistics 2011: Table a-39-1).

Most (actually 70 percent) of all the violent crimes against Whites are perpetrated by Whites, according to the FBI. In contrast to popular misconceptions about crime, African Americans and the poor are especially likely to be the victims of serious crimes. This fact is documented in victimization surveys, which are systematic interviews of ordinary people carried out annually to reveal how much crime occurs. These Department of Justice statistics show that African Americans are 35 percent more likely to be victims of violent crimes than are Whites (Truman 2011).

Central to the concerns of minorities regarding the criminal justice system is differential justice—that is, Whites are dealt with more leniently than are Blacks, whether at the time of investigation, arrest, indictment, conviction, sentencing, incarceration, or parole. Studies demonstrate that police often deal with African American youths more harshly than with White youngsters. Law is a public social institution and in many ways reproduces the inequality experienced in life (Peterson 2012).

In the Speaking Out box, legal scholar Michelle Alexandra considers how African Americans, especially males, are much more likely to be imprisoned and face lifetime consequences even after they have served their time. While Whites and Blacks equally engage in drug crimes (if anything, White youth more), Black men have been admitted to prison on drug offenses 20 to 50 times more often than White men.

It also has been accepted, albeit reluctantly, that the government cannot be counted on to address inner-city problems. In crimes involving African Americans, legal system scholars have observed victim discounting, or the tendency to view crime as less socially significant if the victim is viewed as less worthy. For example, the numerous killings of Black youth going to and from school attract much less attention than, for example, a...
shooting spree that takes five lives in a suburban school. When a schoolchild walks into a cafeteria or schoolyard with automatic weapons and kills a dozen children and teachers, it is a case of national alarm, as with Columbine. When children kill each other in drive-by shootings, it is viewed as a local concern, reflecting the need to clean up a dysfunctional neighborhood. Many African Americans note that the main difference between these two situations is not the death toll but who is being killed: middle-class Whites in the schoolyard shootings and Black ghetto youth in the drive-by shootings.

It is most important to remember that crime and victimization cannot be viewed in isolation but must be seen as interconnected with everything from education to employment, the quality of health care, to the homes to which one returns at the end of the day. W. E. B. Du Bois noted over a century ago that crime was difficult to address precisely because, “It is phenomenon that stands not alone, but rather as a symptom of countless wrong social conditions” (1996:242, originally 1899).

Speaking Out

The New Jim Crow
by Michelle Alexander

Jarvious Cotton cannot vote. Like his father, his grandfather, great-grandfather, and great-great-grandfather, he has been denied the right to participate in our electoral democracy. Cotton’s family tree tells the story of several generations of black men who were born in the United States but who were denied the most basic freedom that democracy promises—the freedom to vote for those who will make the rules and laws that govern one’s life. Cotton’s great-great-grandfather could not vote as a slave. His great-grandfather was beaten to death by the Ku Klux Klan for attempting to vote. His grandfather was prevented from voting by Klan intimidation. His father was barred from voting by poll taxes and literacy tests. Today, Jarvious Cotton cannot vote because he, like many black men in the United States, has been labeled a felon and is currently on parole.

Cotton’s story illustrates, in many respects, the adage, “The more things change, the more they remain the same.” In each generation, new tactics have been used to achieve the same goals—goals shared by the Founding Fathers. Denying African Americans citizenship was deemed essential to the formation of the original union. Hundreds of years later, America is still not an egalitarian democracy. The arguments and rationalizations that have been trotted out in support of racial exclusion and discrimination in its various forms have changed and evolved, but the outcome has remained largely the same. An extraordinary percentage of black men in the United States are legally barred from voting today, just as they have been throughout most of American history. They are also subject to legalized discrimination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service, just as their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents once were.

Since the collapse of Jim Crow, what has changed has less to do with the basic structure of society than with the language we use to justify it. In the era of colorblindness, it is no longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So we don’t. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color “criminals” and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today, it is perfectly legal to discriminate against criminals in nearly all the ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African Americans. Once you’re labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination—employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the right to vote, denial of educational opportunity, denial of food stamps and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service—are suddenly legal. As a criminal, you have scarcely more rights, and arguably less respect, than a Black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America: We have merely redesigned it.

Chapter 6  African Americans

Healthcare

The price of being an African American took on new importance when a shocking study published in a prestigious medical journal revealed that two-thirds of boys in Harlem, a predominantly Black neighborhood in New York City, can expect to die young or in mid-adulthood—that is, before they reach age 65. In fact, they have less chance of surviving even to age 45 than their White counterparts nationwide have of reaching age 65. The medical researchers noted that it is not the stereotyped images of AIDS and violence that explain the staggering difference. Black men are much more likely to fall victim to unremitting stress, heart disease, and cancer (Fing et al. 1996).

Morbidity and mortality rates for African Americans as a group, and not just Harlem men, are equally distressing. Compared with Whites, Blacks have higher death rates from diseases of the heart, pneumonia, diabetes, and cancer. Significant differences exist among segments of the population with Whites living longer than Blacks. So, for example, among those born in 1994, at one extreme a White female could anticipate living to 79.6 years, while a Black male could expect a lifespan of 64.9 years—that is, equivalent to what White females could reasonably expect who were born in 1935 (Arias 2010:Table 12; Bureau of the Census 2010a:Table 102).

Drawing on the conflict perspective, sociologist Howard Waitzkin (1986) suggests that racial tensions contribute to the medical problems of African Americans. In his view, the stress resulting from racial prejudice and discrimination helps explain the higher rates of hypertension found among African Americans (and Hispanics) than among Whites. Death resulting from hypertension is twice as common in Blacks as in Whites; it is believed to be a critical factor in Blacks’ high mortality rates from heart disease, kidney disease, and strokes. Although medical experts disagree, some argue that the stress resulting from racism and suppressed hostility exacerbates hypertension among African Americans (Cooper et al. 1999; A. Green et al. 2007).

Source: Jeff Parker of Florida Today, April 9, 2002.
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Related to the healthcare dilemma is the problem of environmental justice, which was introduced in Chapter 3 and again in Chapter 5 with reference to Native Americans. Problems associated with toxic pollution and hazardous garbage dumps are more likely to be faced by low-income Black communities than by their affluent counterparts. This disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards can be viewed as part of the complex cycle of discrimination faced by African Americans and other subordinate groups in the United States.

Just how significant is the impact of poorer health on the lives of the nation’s less-educated people, less-affluent classes, and subordinate groups? Drawing on a variety of research studies, population specialist Evelyn Kitagawa (1972) estimated the “excess mortality rate” to be 20 percent. In other words, 20 percent more people were dying than otherwise might have because of poor health linked to race and class. Using Kitagawa’s model, we can calculate that if every African American in the United States were White and had at least one year of college education, some 57,000 fewer Blacks would have died in 2012 and in each succeeding year (author’s estimate based on Bureau of the Census 2011a: Table 1).

Politics

Despite Barack Obama entering the White House as president in 2009, African Americans have not received an equal share of the political pie. After Reconstruction, it was not until 1928 that a Black was again elected to Congress. With Obama’s election to the presidency, once again, no African American serves in the U.S. Senate at the time of this writing. Recent years brought some improvement at local levels; the number of Black elected officials increased from fewer than 1,500 in 1970 to over 10,500 in 2011 (Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies 2011).

Obama’s 2008 electoral victory was impressive and, while not a landslide victory, his winning margin indicated widespread support. Expectedly, at least 93 percent of Blacks backed Obama in 2008 and again in 2012, but he also had 66 percent of all voters under 30, and 69 percent of first-time voters were prepared to vote for the first African American president (Connelly 2008; Edison Research 2012).

However, major problems confront the continued success of African American politicians. Locally elected Black officials find it difficult to make the jump to statewide office. Voters, particularly non-Black voters, have difficulty seeing Black politicians as anything other than representatives of the Black community and express concern that the views of Whites and other non-Blacks will not be represented by an African American.

The political gains by African Americans, as well as Hispanics, have been placed in jeopardy by legal actions that questioned race-based districts. Boundaries for elective office, ranging from city council positions to the U.S. House of Representatives, have been drawn in such a way so as to concentrate enough members of a racial or ethnic group to create a “safe majority” to make it likely that a member of that group will get elected. In Chapter 3, we noted how the push to require photo ID, regarded by many as a modern day example of institutional discrimination, by a
growing number of states would have a greater negative impact on potential Black voters than the general electorate.

The changing racial and ethnic landscape can be expected to have an impact on future strategies to elect African Americans to office, especially in urban areas. However, now that the number of Hispanics exceeds the number of Blacks nationwide, observers wonder how this might play out in the political world. A growing number of major cities, including Los Angeles and Chicago, are witnessing dramatic growth in the Hispanic population. Latinos often settle near Black neighborhoods or even displace Blacks who move into the suburbs, making it more difficult to develop African American districts. For example, South Central Los Angeles, the site of rioting in 1992 described earlier, is now two-thirds Latino. The full impact has not been felt yet because the Latino population tends to be younger, with many not yet reaching voting age. Nearly all elected officials who represent the area are Black. Yet resident concerns are nearly the same they were a generation earlier—quality schools, public safety, and economic development (Medina 2012).

Conclusion

While moving from slavery to freedom is dramatic, it took centuries and was opposed every step along the way. An example is the popular publication The Negro Motorist Green Book, which began publication in the 1930s by Harlem civic leader Victor Green and continued into the 1960s. The book offered African American travelers information on where they could be welcomed in diners, hotels, and even private residences. Even decades after end slavery ended, Blacks taking road trips found it useful to have guidance to avoid indignities, which ranged from disrespectful service to actual sundown towns (McGee 2010).

The dramatic events affecting African Americans today have their roots in the forcible bringing of their ancestors to the United States as slaves. In the South, whether as slaves or later as victims of Jim Crow, Blacks were not a real threat to any but the poorest Whites, although even affluent Whites feared the perceived potential threat that Blacks posed. During their entire history here, Blacks have been criticized when they rebelled and praised when they went along with the system. During the time of slavery, revolts were met with increased suppression; after emancipation, leaders who called for accommodation were applauded.

Blacks, in their efforts to bring about change, have understandably differed in their willingness to form coalitions with Whites. African Americans who resisted in the days of either slavery or the civil rights movement (see the intergroup relations continuum in the figure at the bottom of this page) would have concurred with

Thus far, few but now growing in numbers, African Americans are entering positions that few people of any color reach. Don Thompson was named CEO of McDonalds in 2012 having begun his career with the corporation in 1990 as an electrical engineer. In 2012, just five other African Americans were heads of Fortune 500 corporations.
Du Bois’s (1903) comment that a Black person “simply wishes to make it possible to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the door of opportunity closed roughly in his face” (pp. 3–4). The object of Black protest seems simple enough, but for many people, including presidents, the point was lost.

How much progress has been made? When that progress covers several hundred years, beginning with slavery and ending with rights recognized constitutionally, it is easy to be impressed. However, let us consider Topeka, Kansas, the site of the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education case. Linda Brown, one of the original plaintiffs, also was touched by another segregation case. In 1992, the courts held that Oliver Brown, her grandchild, was victimized because the Topeka schools were still segregated, now for reasons of residential segregation. The remedy to separate schools in this Kansas city is still unresolved (Hays 1994).

Black and White Americans have dealt with the continued disparity between the two groups by endorsing several ideologies, as shown in the representation of the Spectrum of Intergroup Relations. Assimilation was the driving force behind the civil rights movement, which sought to integrate Whites and Blacks into one society. People who rejected contact with the other group endorsed separatism. As Chapter 2 showed, both Whites and Blacks generally lent little support to separatism. In the late 1960s, the government and various Black organizations began to recognize cultural pluralism as a goal, at least paying lip service to the desire of many African Americans to exercise cultural and economic autonomy. Perhaps on no other issue is this desire for control more evident than in the schools.

Substantial gains have been made, but will the momentum continue? Improvement has occurred in a generation inspired and spurred on to bring about change. If the resolve to continue toward that goal lessens in the United States, then the picture may become bleaker, and the rate of positive change may decline further.

### SPECTRUM OF INTERGROUP RELATIONS

- **Expulsion**
  - Increasingly unacceptable
  - Victim discounting
  - Medical experimentation
  - One-third of slaves bound for North American perished
  - Lynchings

- **Segregation**
  - More tolerable
  - Secession or partitioning
  - Ghettos
  - All-Black suburbs
  - Redlining
  - Zoning laws
  - Tracking
  - Apartheid schools
  - De jure school segregation
  - Ghettoes
  - Jim Crow
  - Restrictive Covenants
  - Du jure school segregation

- **Assimilation**
  - Fusion or amalgamation or melting pot
  - Acting White
  - Integration
  - Civil rights
  - New Black immigrants

- **Pluralism**
  - More tolerable
  - Pluralism or multiculturalism
  - Black electoral districts
  - Black Power Movement
  - New Black immigrants
Looking Back

Summary

1. Slavery was a system that defined the people forcibly brought from Africa, and their descendants, as property of their masters, having no rights, yet governed by a series of slave codes. Despite the total restrictiveness of slavery as an institution, slaves often tried to resist the system while abolitionists worked for their freedom.

2. Throughout history, many individuals have emerged as leaders within the African American community. Particularly noteworthy were Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, both of whom, although they took different approaches, expressed dissatisfaction with the second-class status of being Black in America.

3. White Americans did not voluntarily embrace major social change. It was achieved only in response to years of civil disobedience through the civil rights movement and the example set by Martin Luther King, Jr. The pace of change was limited, as reflected in the calls for Black Power that came from some youthful members of the movement.

4. African Americans have made gains in all levels of formal schooling but still fall behind the gains made by others.

5. Income and wealth disparities persist between Black and White Americans, and African Americans continue to face the challenge of accumulating assets. Typically, Black Americans are underrepresented in high-wage, high-status occupations and overrepresented in low-wage, low-status occupations.

6. Family life among Black Americans has many identifiable strengths. A particular challenge faces the growing proportion of households that are moving into the middle class.

7. Blacks are more likely to be victims of crime and more likely to be arrested and imprisoned. Critics question whether minorities are subjected to differential justice.

8. Healthcare statistics reveal significantly higher morbidity and mortality rates for African Americans. Black Americans have made great strides in being elected to office but remain underrepresented nationally.

Key Terms

abolitionists, p. 148
apartheid schools, p. 161
civil disobedience, p. 157
class, p. 163
de facto segregation, p. 161
de jure segregation, p. 155
differential justice, p. 170
income, p. 164
Jim Crow, p. 149
racial formation, p. 148
redlining, p. 169
relative deprivation, p. 158
restrictive covenant, p. 154
riff-raff theory, p. 158
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tracking, p. 161
underemployment, p. 165
victim discounting, p. 170
victimization surveys, p. 170
wealth, p. 164
White primary, p. 150
zoning laws, p. 169
Review Questions

1. In what ways were slaves defined as property?
2. To what degree have the civil rights movement initiatives in education been realized, or do they remain unmet?
3. What challenges face the African American middle class?
4. What are the biggest assets and problems facing African American families?
5. What are the similarities in the experiences of African Americans in the criminal justice and healthcare systems?

Critical Thinking

1. How much time do you recall spending in school thus far learning about the history of Europe? How about Africa? What do you think this says about the way education is delivered or what we choose to learn?
2. What would you consider the three most important achievements in civil rights for African Americans since 1950? What roles did Whites and Blacks play in making these events happen?
3. What was the ethnic and racial composition of the neighborhoods in which you have lived and the schools you have attended? Consider how the composition of one may have influenced the other. What steps would have been necessary to ensure more diversity?
4. How are the problems in crime, housing, and health interrelated?