

White Southerners' Perceptions of Blacks During the Jim Crow Era, 1876-1965

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Bachelor Thesis
2010



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Humanities

Univerzita Tomáše Bati ve Zlíně
Fakulta humanitních studií
Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky
akademický rok: 2009/2010

ZADÁNÍ BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Kristýna ZLÁMALOVÁ**
Studijní program: **B 7310 Filologie**
Studijní obor: **Anglický jazyk pro manažerskou praxi**

Téma práce: **Vnímání černochů bílými Jižany v období rasové segregace, 1876-1965**

Zásady pro vypracování:

Úvod
Historické souvislosti- dějiny a vnímání před občanskou válkou
Rekonstrukce Jihu
Bělošská nadřazenost po občanské válce
Odpor vůči míšení ras
Účely segregace
Protesty proti desegregaci
Závěr

Rozsah práce:

Rozsah příloh:

Forma zpracování bakalářské práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Fredrickson, George. The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.

George, Charles. Life Under the Jim Crow Laws. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2000.

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Woodward, C. Vann. The Strange Career of Jim Crow. 3rd ed. Contributed by William S. McFeely. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Vedoucí bakalářské práce:

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Ústav anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání bakalářské práce:

7. ledna 2010

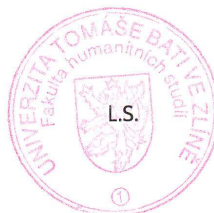
Termín odevzdání bakalářské práce:

7. května 2010

Ve Zlíně dne 7. ledna 2010



prof. PhDr. Vlastimil Švec, CSc.
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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce se zabývá vnímáním černochoů bílými Jižany v období rasové segregace, 1876-1965. Práce obsahuje shrnutí historických souvislostí a vnímání černochoů před občanskou válkou, dále se zabývá vnímáním černochoů bílými Jižany v období Rekonstrukce, bělošskou nadřazeností, odporem bělochů vůči míšení ras, účely segregace i protesty proti desegregaci.

Klíčová slova: Bělošská nadřazenost, černoši, segregáční zákony, vnímání, rasismus, segregace, bílí Jižané.

ABSTRACT

This bachelor thesis deals with white Southerners' perceptions of blacks during the Jim Crow era, 1876-1965. The thesis contains a summary of historical background and antebellum perceptions. It also deals with white Southerners' perceptions of blacks during the Reconstruction era, white supremacy, aversion of whites to miscegenation, purposes of segregation, and protests against desegregation.

Keywords: White supremacy, blacks, Jim Crow laws, perceptions, racism, segregation, white Southerners.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my family, mainly my mother, for her support, and my thesis advisor for his advice and help.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	9
1 BACKGROUND- HISTORY AND ANTEBELLUM PERCEPTIONS.....	10
2 SOUTHERN RECONSTRUCTION.....	14
3 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, NEW SOUTH, 1877-1900.....	19
4 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1900-1916	28
5 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1917-1928	32
6 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1929-1940	37
7 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1941-1954	41
8 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1955-1965	45
9 PROTESTS AGAINST DESEGREGATION.....	51
10 PURPOSES OF SEGREGATION	55
CONCLUSION	58
BIBLIOGRAPHY	59

INTRODUCTION

Scholars have long studied the relationship between whites and blacks in America since the first blacks arrived in the then-English colony of Virginia in 1619. The Jim Crow era constituted a turning point in the relations between American whites and blacks. With the blessing of the authorities segregation between the two races became the norm in the U.S. South. Information about Jim Crow laws and the states that used the laws have already been documented. However, not enough attention has been paid to the reasons for segregation and to white Southerners' perceptions of blacks during the Jim Crow era. Thus the goal of this thesis is to identify and understand such perceptions in order to shed light on why Jim Crow laws were created, why they remained in force so long, and why the protests against desegregation were often so violent. Ultimately, this thesis will suggest that white Southerners perceived blacks as inferior both before and during the Jim Crow era. This attitude combined with their conservatism that led them to resist change, caused Southern whites to cling stubbornly to white supremacy and resist any shift in the social order in the South.

1 BACKGROUND- HISTORY AND ANTEBELLUM PERCEPTIONS

Before dealing with white Southerners' perceptions of blacks during the Jim Crow era, it is first necessary to document antebellum white Southerners' perceptions of blacks. As historian Edmund Morgan once stated, “We may admit that the Englishmen who colonized America and their revolutionary descendants were racists, that consciously or unconsciously they believed liberties and rights should be confined to persons of a light complexion.” This quote demonstrates the deep rootedness of racism in America. Racist attitudes were imported to the New World together with the first British colonists. The idea of white supremacy could be found in the minds of white Americans, especially in the South, during the time of slavery, the New South, and the Jim Crow era as well.¹

Racist utterances were not made only by ordinary people but also by prominent politicians. One of them was Thomas Jefferson, who was president from 1801 to 1809. He believed that “blacks are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind.” Jefferson's household also contained slaves. “When Jefferson contemplated the abolition of slavery, he found it inconceivable that the freed slaves should be allowed to remain in the country.” This solution was accepted by the vast majority of Southerners as well as many Northerners. Even to some abolitionists it seemed unacceptable to free the slaves without deporting them to Africa.²

The firmness of racist attitudes are proven by the existence of “laws [that] specifically exonerated the master who accidentally beat his slave to death, but they placed new limitations on his punishment of 'Christian white servants'.” Such laws made blacks not only inferior to the whites, but they even lowered black people to the level of mere animals, which could be murdered as their murderers would never be punished.³

The advocates of racism could be found even among church members. Preachers often claimed that slaves should obey their masters without protest. They also interpreted the Bible in favor of slavery. Several doctrines claimed that blacks were predestinated for slavery by God. One pronounced that blacks were descendants of Cain and were cursed by God. According to some preachers, black skin implied that blacks were not human beings

¹ Edmund S. Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox,” *The Journal of American History* 59, no. 1 (June 1972): 7.

² Charles H. Wesley, “The Concept of Negro Inferiority in American Thought,” *The Journal of Negro History* 25, no. 4 (October 1940): 545; Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom,” 12.

³ Morgan, “Slavery and Freedom,” 26.

or that they were inferior human beings and should obey white men. As a result blacks found few protectors even in church. Nor did they find much protection from Southern state governments.⁴

In 1835 Governor George McDuffie told the South Carolina General Assembly that “the Negroes were 'destined by providence' for slavery and that this was made evident not only by the color of their skin but also by 'the intellectual inferiority and natural improvidence of this race'. They were, he indicated, 'unfit for self-government of any kind,' and 'in all respects, physical, moral, and political, inferior to millions of human race.” The opinion that blacks were fated to slavery was wide-spread and generally accepted. Especially in the South, it was believed that slavery was the only acceptable condition of black people. The opinion that blacks were “unfit for self-government” constituted just another means of justification of slavery and supported the idea of white supremacy and black inferiority.⁵

Julien J. Virey (1775-1846), a pharmacist, but also philosopher and author, believed that “in mental powers, [...] Negroes were close to the ape, also in their capacity for imitation.” He also concluded that “the Negro is not only dark on the exterior parts of his body but in even the most interior.” Virey claimed that the brain of the blacks is black while the brain of whites is grey. According to Josiah Priest, an American author, “the Negro so closely resembled the ourang-outang in his physical being proved that the Negroes were inferior to the whites.” Virey, Priest, and many others tried to stress the idea of black inferiority as much as possible. Their aim was also to emphasize the differences between blacks and whites. One of the reasons for doing so was to justify slavery. At that time white people believed the opinions of scholars, and their perceptions of blacks were influenced by these opinions.⁶

Scientist Samuel Morton described blacks in his work *Crania Americana* (published in 1839). He stated that blacks were “joyous, flexible, and indolent;” but also that “their institutions are not infrequently characterized by superstition and cruelty,” and that “the Negroes have little invention, but strong powers of imitation, so that they readily

⁴ Robert Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*. Translated by Milada Lindforsová. Prague: Práce, 1982, Originally published as *Černýje pasynki Ameriki* (Moscow: Molodaja gvardija, 1978), 20-21.

⁵ George M. Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 46.

⁶ Wesley, “The Concept of Negro Inferiority in American Thought,” 549, 552.

acquire mechanic arts” and that blacks also “have a great talent for music, and all their external senses are remarkably acute.” The perception of blacks as idle, superstitious, and great musicians was common mainly during the time of slavery. “Like many scientists of his day, Morton believed that there is a correlation between intelligence and brain size.” He claimed that “whites have larger skulls than other races and are therefore superior.” The psychological effect is obvious- a reputable scientist pronounced an opinion so the masses accepted it.⁷

Building on Morton's research, Josiah Nott claimed in 1848 that “the forehead of the Negro was narrower and more receding. This made the intellectual portion of the brain more deficient.” Nott, as well as Morton, wanted to prove that blacks were inferior to whites on the basis of comparing the size of their brain.⁸

A South Carolina judge in 1852 pronounced his opinion that when a black person forgot or refused to get out of the way to let a white person go past, they behaved disrespectfully. According to him, such behavior could not be tolerated because it violated the principle of black inferiority which served as the basis of the social order. The social order, as well as the idea of white supremacy, represented two extremely important principles in the history of the U.S. South and actually constituted the foundation on which Southern society was based.⁹

During the slavery era, it was very popular to advocate slavery in terms of the friendly relationship between a master and his slaves. In an article published in *The Spectator* on 6 December 1859, there was written:

The intelligent, christian slave-holder at the South is the best friend of the negro. He does not regard his bonds-men as mere chattel property, but as human beings to whom he owes duties. While the Northern Pharisee will not permit a negro to ride on the city railroads, Southern gentlemen and ladies are seen every day, side by side, in cars and coaches, with their faithful servants. Here the honest black

⁷ Facing History and Ourselves, “Samuel Morton,” Race and Membership: The Eugenics Movement, <http://www.facinghistorycampus.org/campus/rm.nsf/0/EF74E5855AECC09A85256FDE00789C1F> (accessed March 16, 2010).

⁸ Wesley, “The Concept of Negro Inferiority in American Thought,” 549.

⁹ Herbert Aptheker, *Boj za svobodu – kapitoly z dějin černošského lidu*. Translated by Čestmír Komárek. Prague: Rovnost, 1952. Originally published as *To be free* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), 22-23.

man is not only protected by the laws and public sentiment, but he is respected by the community as truly as if his skin were white.¹⁰

Even in this quote white skin color is marked as the better one (“as if his skin were white”). Blacks were perceived as human beings, though they were perceived as human beings of degraded form.

The justification of the enslavement of black people was their supposed inferiority, which was furiously advocated by the supporters of slavery. The slaveholders (but not only them) were always ready to use the concept of black inferiority to their own benefit. The advocates of slavery went even so far to claim that slavery was for blacks a better condition than freedom. Such an opinion probably originated from the fear of a freed black man. As Samuel Cartwright stated in 1861, “...the negro must, from necessity, be the slave of man or the slave of Satan.” This quote demonstrates the immense fear of a freed black man. Not only might they be violent, but they could also cause the possible collapse of the social order. To maintain the social order as it was, the images of wild, savage, and dangerous freed black men were propagated.¹¹

As historian George Fredrickson stated, “The notion that bestial savagery constituted the basic Negro character and that the loyal 'Sambo' figure was a social product of slavery served to channel genuine fears and anxieties by suggesting a program of preventive action, while at the same time legitimizing a conditional 'affection' for the Negro. As a slave he was loveable, but as a freedman he would be a monster.” Blacks were perceived as inferior, however, there existed an immense fear of black rebellions and of freed slaves. Blacks were perceived as a great threat unless they were under control of a white man. Politicians, scientists, the priests- all claimed black inferiority to preserve the white supremacy.¹²

White Southerners were uncomfortable with blacks, but they needed blacks as well, as the Southern economy was based on slave labor. These facts made the relationship between whites and blacks in the South greatly complicated, and influenced considerably their reciprocal perceptions.

¹⁰ The Valley of the Shadow, “Freedom and Slavery,” White Southerners' Defense of Slaveholding: Article Two, <http://www2.vcdh.virginia.edu/teaching/vclassroom/proslavewsht2.html> (accessed March 16, 2010).

¹¹ Samuel Cartwright, “Negro Freedom: An Impossibility under Nature's Laws,” *De Bow's Review* 30 (May-June, 1861): 651.

¹² Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 54-55.

2 SOUTHERN RECONSTRUCTION

After the Civil War, the Thirteenth, the Fourteenth, and the Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution were ratified. These amendments abolished slavery, granted citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” and granted African American men the right to vote. Highly important was the fact that slavery was abolished thanks to armed force. Federal troops stayed in the South during the Reconstruction era (1865-1877). It is important to realize that most Southerners wanted to maintain slavery, not to emancipate blacks. However, the South lost the Civil War, and therefore the Southerners had no choice but to accept these amendments to the Constitution.¹³

According to Dr. Ian Finseth, who specializes in 19th century American and African American literature, “the story of reconstruction is in large measure a story of the tension between expanding the rights of freedmen and the unabated racism of Southerners and Northerners alike.” Slaves were freed, they were granted citizenship and the right to vote, but the racist attitudes of most whites did not disappear. Blacks had been perceived as inferior for centuries and whites were not able to change their mind over night. The emancipation of blacks came as a significant and all too quick change for whites, and they simply were not able to accept the abolition of slavery and black equality at the same time.¹⁴

Blacks were still perceived as inferior, and whites still clung to white supremacy. As a result, whites responded to the Thirteenth Amendment with the Black Codes, “numerous laws enacted in the states of the former Confederacy ... , in 1865 and 1866; the laws were designed to replace the social controls of slavery that had been removed by the Emancipation Proclamation and the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution, and were thus intended to assure continuance of white supremacy” while at the same time securing a steady supply of cheap labor. The South found itself in a desperate economic situation after the war, and it was greatly important to have sources of cheap labor.¹⁵

¹³ Aptheke, *Boj za svobodu*, 163.

¹⁴ American Studies @UVA, “The Post War Years,” University of Virginia, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~cap/SCARTOONS/caremanc.html> (accessed March 19, 2010).

¹⁵ Hollis R. Lynch, “Americans of African Ancestry,” World History Center, http://history-world.org/black_codes.htm (accessed March 19, 2010).

The legislatures in the South “undertook the business of determining the status of freedmen in society;” and because “the legislators operated under certain obligations, not all of the black codes were oppressive.” Freedmen were permitted to own and sell property, and also to make a contract. On the other hand, it was prohibited to blacks to serve on juries and provide legal testimony. Black Codes prohibited interracial marriage and also established segregated public facilities. Vagrancy laws fined unemployed blacks and consequently sent them to prison to work off their fine, and also required licensing for non-agricultural occupations.¹⁶

Interracial marriages were prohibited immediately after the abolition of slavery, probably because of the fear of miscegenation and pollution of the white race. The perception of blacks as possible threat to the racial purity of whites was typical for white Southerners, and they started to be obsessed with the idea of a black man lusting after a white woman. Representative of many such state laws was an 1865 Georgia Statute that made it “Unlawful for officials to issue marriage licenses to persons of African descent and the other a white person. Penalty: A misdemeanor that carried a fine between \$200 and \$500, or confinement in jail for three months, or both. Ministers who married such persons also guilty of a misdemeanor, and fined between \$500 and \$1,000, or confined in jail for six months, or both.” Mississippi went even further by declaring it “a felony for any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto to intermarry with any white person. Penalty: Imprisonment in state penitentiary for life.”¹⁷

School segregation also occurred; A Tennessee statute from 1866 created a segregated schooling system by stating simply, “Separate schools required for white and black children”. Likewise, a state statute from 1869 stated, “While no citizen of Tennessee could be excluded from attending the University of Tennessee on account of his race or color, the accommodation and instruction of persons of color shall be separate from those for white persons.” Other Southern states sooner or later created the system of segregated schooling as well.¹⁸

¹⁶ American Studies @UVA, “The Post War Years.”

¹⁷ The History of Jim Crow, “Jim Crow Laws: Mississippi,” Jimcrowhistory.org, <http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/scripts/jimcrow/insidesouth.cgi?state=Mississippi> (accessed February 25, 2010).

¹⁸ The History of Jim Crow, “Jim Crow Laws: Tennessee,” Jimcrowhistory.org, <http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/scripts/jimcrow/insidesouth.cgi?state=Tennessee> (accessed February 25, 2010).

The belief that blacks “would quickly die out after emancipation because they would not work without compulsion” was widely held by white Southerners in 1865 and 1866, “but such expectations obviously failed to jibe with reality and tended to be forgotten in the political struggle which soon developed over the Negro's immediate status.” White Southerners, especially the former slaveholders, perceived blacks as idle and unable to take care of themselves, unable to survive without the control of whites.¹⁹

The federal government “sought to gain a tighter grip” on Southern reconstruction by creating the Freedmen's Bureau, “a Federal agency charged with helping to manage and ease the transition from slavery to freedom.” The Freedmen's Bureau “set up offices in each of the former Confederate states” and then busied itself with “the adjudication of disputes between blacks and whites, observation of trials, and the arrangement of contractual labor relationships between former slaves and owners.” The Bureau also “gave a boost to thousands of freedmen by settling families on abandoned land, arranging land sales at cheap prices, and providing livestock and equipment. As a last resort, the agency simply gave food rations to large numbers of poor and unemployed African-Americans.” Opponents of the Freedmen's Bureau argued that “the fact that the offices provided assistance to the unemployed” encouraged blacks “to be 'idle'.” The white Southerners' perception of blacks as indolent appeared over and over again. The belief that blacks would not work without being forced to, so popular during the time of slavery, was maintained. On the other hand, whites offered to blacks the worst and the most dirty work, and then paid them poorly (if at all) for their efforts.²⁰

The former Confederate States wanted to rejoin the Union after the Civil War. The states were also afraid of possible Federal intervention, so they had to accept the emancipation of blacks. In Alabama in 1867, a “constitutional convention included 18 African Americans who spoke against the discriminatory constitutional and statutory language in the existing legal system” and “the convention voted against mandating segregated schooling in its constitution.” The constitution from 1868 “included an equal-protection guarantee and also secured suffrage rights for men over 21 regardless of race”, however, it provided only little formal legal protection for blacks. “Even these fairly modest reforms provoked outrage among many Democrats and conservatives, and the

¹⁹ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 236.

broader politics of Reconstruction contributed to the formation of the Ku Klux Klan,” which “directly targeted African Americans and their white allies who sought to enforce guarantees of equal political and social rights.”²¹

The emancipation of blacks enraged the members of the Ku Klux Klan so much that they tortured, hanged, and killed blacks. The KKK believed in white supremacy so deeply that it was not afraid to use the worst methods of torturing to make blacks afraid to exercise the rights that were guaranteed them by the Constitution.

Black people had protectors in the Radicals. The Radicals believed that “the negro is fitted to exercise all the rights of the citizen where he is, but that his remaining and exercising such rights, even to the extent of voting, is necessary to make the Southern states loyal and desirable members of the Union.” The fact that blacks had their protectors also in the South, evoked fear in many whites that the South would not be under the control of whites anymore. Such a future was so unacceptable to them that they fought with the Radicals, ending in The Memphis Race Riot (May 1-2, 1866) and The New Orleans Race Riot (July 30, 1866). Forty-six blacks and two whites were killed during the Memphis riot. During The New Orleans Race Riot 100 were injured and thirty-four blacks and three white Radicals were killed. Injury and death increased because white supremacy was threatened. The fear of possible shifts in the social order as well as the unwillingness to abandon the ideas of black inferiority and white superiority were the causes of such tragedies.²²

One outcome of the Memphis and New Orleans riots was the congressional move toward Radical Reconstruction. “The Radical Republicans passed a Civil Rights Bill and the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing citizenship, equal protection of the laws, and due process to former slaves.” Confederate states were forced to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment before being allowed to return to the Union. “Paradoxically, the former slaves became citizens, voters, and officeholders in part due to the Reconstruction acts passed in

²⁰ American Studies @UVA, “The Post War Years.”

²¹ Encyclopedia of Alabama, “The Rise of Legal Segregation,” Segregation (Jim Crow), <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1248> (accessed March 18, 2010).

²² Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 177; Bobby L. Lovett, “Memphis Race Riot of 1866,” The Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/imagegallery.php?EntryID=M080> (accessed March 20, 2010); Center for History and New Media, “New Orleans Riot of 1866,” <http://chnm.gmu.edu/courses/122/carr/riottext.html> (accessed March 20, 2010).

response to the race riots in Memphis and elsewhere.” White supremacists were absolutely furious because of the outcome of the riots, as they wanted slavery to be maintained, but blacks were emancipated instead.²³

Albion W. Tourgée, “who settled in North Carolina and became a judge under its Radical regime,” claimed that “the Southern Republican Party [...] was composed largely of impoverished blacks and lower-class whites” and that “these men would soon find themselves at the mercy of the large landowners, who were in a position to apply economic pressure and undo the reforms of Reconstruction.” Historian George Fredrickson pointed out that this actually happened: the North was “manifesting an increasing reluctance to interfere- a growing desire to wash its hands of the whole matter- Southern white 'redeemers' toppled one Radical government after another between 1870 and 1877 and established white-supremacist regimes. Southern Radicalism, [...] had no chance of withstanding the economic, political, and paramilitary opposition of the white majority.” Blacks had their protectors indeed. But these protectors constituted a minority of white Southerners, while the majority believed in black inferiority, and in the need of the disfranchisement of blacks as well. The acceptance of black emancipation could have been characterized as very reluctant on the part of majority of white Southerners, and occurred mainly because of the fear of Federal intervention.²⁴

According to Fredrickson, “When the Reconstruction governments foundered, many in the North were quick to say that the blacks had had their fair chance, had demonstrated their present incapacity for self-government, and could justifiably be relegated, for time being at least, to an inferior status.” Northerners did not believe in the equality of blacks and whites either, and they started to use Jim Crow laws, harsh and degrading system of segregation, which were quickly embraced by white Southerners as well.²⁵

²³ Bobby L. Lovett, “Memphis Race Riot of 1866.”

²⁴ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 194-195.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 197.

3 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, NEW SOUTH, 1877-1900

Federal occupation of the South ended in 1877. The period of Reconstruction was over. The South “experienced drastic economic and social change in the post-Reconstruction, or New South, era. The term 'New South,' coined in 1874 by *Atlanta Constitution* managing editor Henry W. Grady, refers to the economic shift from an exclusively agrarian society to one that embraced industrial development.”²⁶

A shift also occurred in the South's political life: “Every session of the Virginia General Assembly from 1869 to 1891 contained Negro members. Between 1876 and 1894 North Carolinians elected fifty-two Negroes to the lower house of their state legislature, and between 1878 and 1902 forty-seven Negroes served in the South Carolina General Assembly.”²⁷

A possible reason for allowing blacks to participate in politics could be the fear of black revolts. Especially in the Black Belt blacks constituted a majority of inhabitants and to prevent them to claim their rights guaranteed by the Constitution could be extremely dangerous for white Southerners. To be exact, in 1880 blacks constituted 60.3% of inhabitants of the Black Belt states, 59.8% in 1890, and 59.9% in 1900.²⁸

The fact that the white Southerners were not honest in allowing blacks to participate in politics, demonstrated the restrictions of blacks' rights, which were put into practice shortly after the end of Reconstruction. An example is the post-Reconstruction treatment of blacks in Alabama: “Formal and informal policies of repression, such as separate public accommodations, limited access to suffrage, and strict control over black labor, were put into place between the 1870s and the 1890s, and Alabama's 1901 constitution rested upon white supremacy as a basic element of governance.”²⁹

²⁶ Encyclopedia of Alabama, “New South Era,” <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2128> (accessed March 18, 2010).

²⁷ C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 3rd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 54.

²⁸ Harry Haywood, *Za osvobození černochů*. Translated by Káťa Ošancová. Prague: Práce-vydavatelstvo ROH, 1952. Originally published as *Negro Liberation* (New York: International Publishers, 1948), 25, 29.

²⁹ Encyclopedia of Alabama, “The Rise of Legal Segregation,” Segregation (Jim Crow), <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1248> (accessed March 18, 2010).

White supremacy was a dogma that white Southerners (as well as white Northerners) were not ready and were not willing to deny. C. Vann Woodward described this phenomenon as follows:

Slavery was only one of several ways by which the white man has sought to define the Negro's status, his 'place,' and assure his subordination. Exploitation of the Negro by the white man goes back to the beginning of relations between the races in modern times, and so do the injustices and brutalities that accompany exploitation. Along with these practices and in justification and defense of them, were developed the old assumptions of Anglo-Saxon superiority and innate African inferiority, white supremacy and Negro subordination. In so far as segregation is based on these assumptions, therefore, it is based on the old pro-slavery argument and has its remote ideological roots in the slavery period.³⁰

Slavery was over, Reconstruction was over, but the concept of black inferiority was still in the minds of white Southerners (and white Northerners as well). This indicates that white Americans found racism and the idea of white supremacy right and unambiguous, as if they did not, they would not keep the racist attitudes and behavior, as well as the forms of oppression of blacks.

As historian George Fredrickson put it, “the late 1870s and 1880s constituted a transitional period in the history of Negro voting between the full suffrage of the Reconstruction era and the total disfranchisement of the end of the century.” White Southerners thus demonstrated that they were opponents of emancipation of blacks, as they guaranteed blacks their rights during as short a period as possible. As soon as the North ceased to be interested in the condition of Southern blacks, the Southern states disfranchised blacks again and the situation of blacks, with respect to their rights, was not very different from that of slavery.³¹

Southern whites showed a willingness to supervise blacks, and to bring them up as well. Whites were always ready to tell blacks how they should behave. In the 1880s in the South the Reverend Atticus G. Haygood of Georgia, a Methodist educator, was a “leading intellectual exponent of an accommodationist and paternalistic attitude toward the Negro” who “proposed a doctrine of Negro 'uplift' under the guidance of benevolent Southern whites.” Haygood's perceptions of blacks reflected the perceptions of the majority of the

³⁰ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 11.

Southerners- blacks were seen as worse than whites, less intelligent than whites, as in the need of being taught by whites how to behave, to become better people. Haygood also pronounced his opinion that "Negroes got all the good of slavery" as they obtained "the habit of labor, the English language, some knowledge of the institutions of a Christian republic, and, as to thousands of them, the religion of Jesus Christ." According to Southern whites, blacks needed to be separated from whites, and be supervised by them as well. The contradiction is obvious.³²

Although separation was supported by whites, it could cause problems as well. As Fredrickson put it, absolute segregation made it very difficult for whites to control blacks: "How could whites stimulate Negro improvement by good example and uplifting advice if they had less and less contact with the black community?" The basic problem of the white Southerners was that they wanted to control blacks and to be separated from them at the same time. It was impossible to satisfy both these wishes. To lose control over blacks was unacceptable to the white Southerners, as they had been controlling blacks for centuries. Blacks had been controlled by whites since they were imported to America. They were compelled to work on the plantations as slaves. After slavery was finished, and blacks were allowed to vote and serve in office (and again- *whites* allowed them to do so), whites regulated the number of black politicians participating in politics, and finally, blacks were disfranchised by whites. Blacks were all that time perceived as those who had to be controlled and supervised, as whites believed it was necessary. Supervision constituted a way how to maintain white supremacy.³³

Whites were very critical of blacks during the time of slavery, and during the post-Reconstruction era as well. Fredrickson described the tension between whites and blacks during the New South era as follows:

The growing dissatisfaction with the blacks also had a regional economic side, in that the declining situation of Southern agriculture cast doubt on the promise of a general prosperity made by proponents of the 'New South' and invited racist explanations for the South's economic shortcomings. Finally, there was a growing uneasiness about what was happening in the segregated black community; whites found that the price of increasing social separation was a lack of knowledge about

³¹ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 201.

³² *Ibid.*, 204-205.

³³ *Ibid.*, 218.

how blacks were living and what they were thinking that bred suspicion and fed fears that chaos, violence, and disease would overflow from the black sector and 'contaminate' or debase the white community.³⁴

It is important to point out that only evil deeds were expected from blacks. This could be regarded as deep-seeded prejudice. On the other hand, claims of depravity of blacks were deliberately used to keep blacks in an inferior position to whites, later also to justify the disfranchisement of blacks and the fact that only whites had the right to make all the decisions- in politics, in economy, in social affairs.

Thomas Jefferson proposed deportation of freed slaves, and in the New South era this proposal appeared again. "Deportation proposals [...] revealed an ominous tendency to use blacks as scapegoats for the real or apparent failures of the New South program of sectional reunion, capitalist prosperity, and benevolent white supremacy." Blacks were blamed that their "economic inefficiency [was] a cause of the South's failure to achieve the general prosperity promised by New South spokesmen." The supporters of expatriation recalled "the extreme and ineradicable inferiority of the blacks" and also "the inevitability of bitter racial antagonism," and argued that the only solution of the race problems in the U.S. South was complete separation.³⁵

The deportation proposals in fact pointed to the desire of whites to live in a country where only white people would live. As Fredrickson put it, there existed "the persistence in the white imagination of the impossible dream of absolute racial homogeneity," and this dream "tended to become vocal in the nineteenth century whenever the racial situation reached a certain level of tension and ambiguity." Blacks were perceived as those who had caused all the problems, and to be better to get rid of.³⁶

Fredrickson described in his book *The Black Image in the White Mind* the situation of blacks which demonstrates how they were disfranchised by the beginning of the twentieth century:

During the 1890s, the unrealizable urge for true homogeneity was sublimated and put in the service of a campaign to achieve a closer approximation to the pseudo homogeneity of the slave era. The white political divisions of that decade,

³⁴ Ibid., 262-263.

³⁵ Ibid., 264.

³⁶ Ibid., 266.

occasioned by the agrarian-Populist revolt against a conservative, business-oriented leadership, led briefly to a competition for the black vote which tended to be disastrous to the side that most openly courted Negro support because opponents could then resort to race baiting. In the end, the Negro became the scapegoat for the political and economic tensions of the period. The result was legal disfranchisement, the passage of rigorous Jim Crow laws, new and more horrible forms of lynching, and a series of one-sided race riots which took a heavy toll of defenseless blacks.³⁷

There existed many ways of justification of 'whites' racist attitudes towards blacks, and the worshippers of white supremacy never missed the chance to amplify their ideology: "At home and abroad biologists, sociologists, anthropologists, [...] gave support to the doctrine that races were discrete entities and that the 'Anglo-Saxon' or 'Caucasian' was the superior of them all," and consequently "Southern politicians [...] found that such intellectual endorsement of their racist theories facilitated acceptance of their views and policies."³⁸

Discrimination against blacks occurred also in schooling. During the 1890s and the early 20th century in the South there appeared two opposite opinions on the education of blacks- there were "believers in the black-degeneracy hypothesis" who believed that "a properly conceived program of black education could contribute to the security of white rule and those extremists who argued, in effect, that black education of any kind was a danger to the white community." It is important to point out that for slavery and for school segregation (and keeping blacks uneducated) existed the same justification- black-degeneracy, demonstrating that whites' prejudice against blacks and their belief in black intellectual inferiority were extremely persevering and long-lasting. George T. Winston pronounced in his work "The Relation of the Whites to the Negroes" an opinion that blacks would, thanks to attendance in industrial schools, obtain "good habits and good manners" and also "respect for elders and superiors." Demonstrating the opinion that blacks should (and were forced to) respect whites, but never vice-versa. The opponents to industrial education of blacks declared that industrial education "prepared blacks for vocations also coveted by lower-class whites, thus inspiring ambitions that could not be realized and setting the stage for an increase in racial competition and antagonism." Nevertheless,

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 74.

whites actually caused the racial antagonism- by oppressing blacks, degrading them, lynching them, and murdering them.³⁹

White supremacists thought up various reasons why blacks should remain uneducated. “By 1900 the case against the very concept of black education tended to become synonymous with a peculiarly thoroughgoing and consistent application of the black-degeneracy hypothesis.” Some researchers attempted to prove that blacks suffered many other defects, but lately it was proved that the data were far from accurate or reliable. The clearly biased scientists were able even to falsify the results of their research so that they could claim that the black-degeneracy hypothesis was right, but it was not.⁴⁰

White Southerners believed that “education fed the propensity of blacks to think themselves the equals of whites,” and that “such perceptions inflicted serious damage on the black psyche, with far-reaching consequences for the entire society.” White Southerners did not want blacks to become equal to whites. They wanted to maintain white superiority. The belief that blacks were not able to become the equal of whites as it would ruin them psychologically was deep-seeded, and supported by so-called psychologists as well. Such a belief served as a justification of the fact that blacks were not provided education of such a high quality as whites and they were not given a chance to become the equal of whites, as blacks were by various forms of oppression kept in the inferior status. The far-reaching consequences for the entire society would be the shifts in the social order which the elevation of blacks would bring. Of course, most whites did not desire any elevations of blacks and social order shifts.⁴¹

Another attempt to keep blacks uneducated was performed by John Roach Straton, a professor at Mercer University in Georgia, who declared that there existed “a correlation between the decline of illiteracy and the rise in criminality.” His proofs to support this claim were not very reliable but white Southerners were not difficult to persuade that it was not needed to educate blacks on the same level as whites. Consequently, there “was an increasing gap between expenditures for white education and what was grudgingly vouchsafed to black schools.” Demonstrating that people responsible for financing the

³⁹ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 269-270.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 270.

⁴¹ Leon F. Litwack, “The White Man's Fear of the Educated Negro: How the Negro Was Fitted for His Natural and Logical Calling,” *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 20 (Summer 1998): 106.

education of whites and blacks believed Straton's opinion, they decided not to support blacks in their criminal behavior by spending very little money for their education.⁴²

The signal that segregation and the use of Jim Crow laws were just at the beginning of their long-lasting application constituted *Plessy v. Ferguson*, a decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court on 18 May, 1896, claiming that “separate but equal” facilities did not violate the U.S. Constitution (railroads in some Southern states, for instance, Mississippi, Georgia, and Louisiana, were already made separate before the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision.)

Another example of racial oppression was lynching. It seemed that Southern whites did not find such a method awful. According to Fredrickson, “A speaker told the Montgomery race conference in 1900, that 'the white race regards the rape of white women by Negroes not as ordinary criminality,' but as 'an attack on the integrity of the race.’” It remains a question what the speaker meant by “the integrity of the race.” One possibility was the anti-miscegenation attitude and therefore the fear of the pollution of the racial purity of whites. White Southerners very strongly opposed miscegenation, as they were convinced that miscegenation would cause the downfall of the white race.⁴³

The very strong opposition to miscegenation was a characteristic feature of the attitudes of white Southerners. They became obsessed with maintaining the purity of white race. To secure racial purity, there existed certain ways to determine if someone was black or white: “[...] Most white southerners abided by the 'one drop rule'; that is, they considered a person with any degree of African 'blood' a Negro.”⁴⁴

Fredrickson pointed out that T. N. Page in his work *The Negro: The Southerner's Problem* “explained lynching as an inevitable response to the black rapist, although his own statistics showed conclusively that the victim was not even accused of rape in the overwhelming majority of cases.” There existed no justification for lynching innocent victims. The extreme brutality of lynching pointed to the absolute blinders and immeasurable hate of the murderers. It was declared that “lynching was a 'necessary evil' in a segregated society, pending more effective methods to control the black population and curb its 'criminal' tendencies.” Nevertheless, lynching was not a necessary evil, it was evil

⁴² Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 271.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 274.

committed because of cruelty and race hate, because of the desire to oppress blacks and make them respect white power. The “efforts to [...] justify lynching help account for the popularity around the turn of the century of the stereotype of the 'Negro as beast.’” The justification of lynching blacks was that they were brutal and criminal. This was paradoxical- blacks were perceived as brutes by people who were able to torture, lynch, and murder them.⁴⁵

Around the turn of the century, the “propagandists of race hate” claimed that “the Negro by nature was a criminal type.” This idea became very popular among the racists and supporters of repression of blacks. It was very influential to pronounce an opinion that rights, and hence power as well, could not be given to criminals. Pronouncing all blacks as criminals constituted a way of disfranchising them. The criminality of blacks served as a justification of lynchings as well. Fredrickson commented on this problem as follows:

Many Southern apologists [of lynching and other extreme measures to control the black population] contended that criminal and 'brute' tendencies of the new generation of blacks constituted the crowning and conclusive argument for strengthening the whole system of racial repression. The granting of political rights, it was argued, had led to dreams of 'social equality' and had encouraged blacks to expropriate white women by force. Thus the Negro's overpowering desire for white women was often described as the central fact legitimizing the whole program of legalized segregation and disfranchisement.⁴⁶

White Southerners' fear of miscegenation was very deep-seeded. However, it also served as a kind of weapon used against blacks, as the fear of miscegenation was used as justification of segregation and discrimination.

Fredrickson pointed out a very interesting paradox as for white Southerners' perceptions of blacks: “Even the most oppressed and rigidly subordinated black sharecropper could serve as a symbol of terror for the white-supremacist imagination.” The question was if the oppression of blacks occurred because of white Southerners' fear of blacks. Blacks had, after all those years of slavery and degradation, grounds for revenge. Perhaps, this was what whites feared- the revenge of blacks. Southern whites perceived

⁴⁴ Victoria E. Bynum, “White Negroes' in Segregated Mississippi: Miscegenation, Racial Identity, and the Law,” *The Journal of Southern History* 64, no. 2 (May 1998): 266.

⁴⁵ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 274-275.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 281-282.

blacks as inferior and suitable for slavery, nevertheless, they were aware of the fact that majority of blacks did not share their opinion.⁴⁷

It is necessary to mention that the image of a black man as a criminal, as a beast, had its opponents among white Southerners. One of them was Julius D. Dreher, the president of Roanoke College, who claimed in 1889 that a black man “is naturally docile and peaceable.” Dreher did not believe that blacks were dangerous to whites. This perception of blacks appeared during the time of slavery, usually claimed by the slaveholders who were satisfied with the behavior of their slaves- that was, when they obeyed the commands of their masters quickly and without protest.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Ibid., 282.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 286.

4 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1900-1916

The period between 1900 and 1916 saw significant changes in the way life looked like in the U.S. South- there occurred the trend towards complete segregation and industrialization. Also, the migration of blacks to the North began at the end of this period.

C. Vann Woodward described the spread of Jim Crow laws in the U.S. South, as well as the changes in everyday life which the segregation laws brought:

The mushroom growth of discriminatory and segregation laws during the first two decades of this [twentieth] century piled up a huge bulk of legislation. [...] For up and down the avenues and byways of Southern life appeared with increasing profusion the little signs: 'Whites Only' or 'Colored.' [...] Many appeared without requirement by law – over entrances and exits, at theaters and boarding houses, toilets and water fountains, waiting rooms and ticket windows.⁴⁹

The railroads and schooling were already segregated and segregation was applied to more and more areas of human life.

Jim Crow laws extended also to employment. As C. Vann Woodward put it, “A large body of law grew up concerned with the segregation of employees and their working conditions.” He stated also that “In most instances segregation in employment was established without the aid of statute. And in many crafts and trades the written or unwritten policies of Jim Crow unionism made segregation superfluous by excluding Negroes from employment.” Blacks were not only separated from whites, but they suffered also job and wage discrimination. Blacks were offered worse job positions than whites, and professional and higher positions were held by whites only. This went together with keeping blacks uneducated and the schools designed for them underfinanced.⁵⁰

Segregation spread like a plague, especially in the South. “Smaller towns sometimes excluded Negro residents completely simply by letting it be known in forceful ways that their presence would not be tolerated. In 1914 there were six such towns in Texas, five in Oklahoma, and two in Alabama.” Such terrible treatment of blacks did not correspond with the democratic principles on which the United States of America was based. Nevertheless,

⁴⁹ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 98.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

the statements of the inferiority of blacks served as justification for segregation, even for excluding them completely from some towns, as mentioned earlier.⁵¹

On the other hand, in the South there appeared white moderates who believed in the inferiority of blacks but protested against lynching and other brutal treatments of blacks. Such attitude towards blacks was called “the new accommodationism.” According to Southern white liberals, “the Negro could be made substantially better, but it was doubtful if he could ever be raised to the level of the whites.”⁵²

Charles T. Hopkins, who was a prominent white lawyer from Atlanta, believed that blacks did not deserve harsh treatment: “The Negro race,” he said, “is a child race. We are a strong race, their guardians.” He also claimed that “Christianity and humanity demand that we [whites] treat the Negro fairly.” Hopkins believed that blacks were harmless: “He [the Negro] only knows those things we teach him to do; it is our Christian duty to protect him.” Nevertheless, the proposals of the Southern white liberals did not win the support of the majority of white Southerners.⁵³

Some white Southerners were very far from considering fair and gentle treatment of blacks, as was demonstrated by the Atlanta Race Riot of 1906, during which more than twenty blacks were killed by white mobs. This act of brutal violence against blacks was by far not the first in the history of the U.S. South.

All these forms of oppression of blacks- segregation, discrimination, lynching, excluding them from towns- is reminiscent of the practice later used by the Nazis against the Jews during the Second World War. And such a treatment of blacks was exercised in the United States, the country that supposedly served as a model of democracy for the rest of the world.

On one hand, blacks were scared of whites, of whites' antagonism towards them, so blacks might feel safer when segregated from their oppressors. On the other hand, segregation had to be extremely degrading for blacks, as they were aware of the fact that the whites, the superior race as they called themselves, wanted distance from blacks and in fact wanted to have nothing in common with blacks. Thus centuries of humiliation accomplished their aim- to persuade blacks that they were inferior, dumb, and incapable of

⁵¹ Ibid., 101.

⁵² Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 283, 284, 287, 295.

⁵³ Ibid., 287, 297.

self-improvement. The dogma of white supremacy had been claimed so long and so pervasively that many blacks really believed that whites were the superior and more noble race.

Whites never asked blacks what they wanted or what they desired whites imagined it instead, and acted accordingly. And very often they failed to imagine the real needs of blacks. Slavery was abolished because a white man of the Union wanted it. Segregation was put into practice as a white man wanted, and the rights of blacks were given to them and taken away from them as a white man wished.

And then the First World War broke out. The First World War contributed to the development of the war industry also in the U.S. The factories in the North needed reinforcement of the labor force. That was the main reason of the significant migration of blacks from the South to the North. Between the years 1915 and 1918 more than half a million blacks left the South for the North. The Northerners did not behave in a more friendly way towards blacks than the Southerners did- the Northerners ostracized and despised blacks as well.⁵⁴

A setback for race relations between whites and blacks was “The Birth of a Nation,” a 1915 film describing the period of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The film, directed by D.W. Griffith, was based on an anti-black novel from 1905, named *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* by Thomas F. Dixon, Jr. who was a Baptist minister, lecturer, writer, and playwright from North Carolina. This work was immediately transformed by its author himself into a play named *The Clansman*, which was racist, portrayed blacks very negatively, and contributed to the support of the KKK. The NAACP protested against playing the film “The Birth of a Nation” in the cinemas. After the premiere of the film, there occurred riots in Boston or Philadelphia. Some cities refused to play the film, including Chicago, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, Minneapolis, or Denver.

In the film “The Birth of a Nation,” blacks are depicted as bloodthirsty brutal rapists and murderers who prevented whites from voting after the abolition of slavery. Southern whites were depicted as victims of the freed blacks. There occurred black mobs in the film and pictures of blacks taking over power. This image of such a future greatly frightened white Southerners. The worst scenario of interracial contact white Southerners could

⁵⁴ Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*, 83.

imagine- a black man wanting to rape a white woman- also appears in the film, and the white woman prefers to jump from a cliff to being touched by the black man who went after her. This scene depicted black men in the worst possible way. The scene was very influential, as it stimulated the white Southerners' fear of miscegenation. After having watched the film, a white man killed a black teenager in Lafayette, Indiana. The film was so influential that it even made one man kill another. The film caused violence in the streets. White mobs were attacking blacks after the film was released.

On the other hand, in the film the members of the KKK were described as brave and honest men, as the protectors of defenseless whites who had been hurt by black brutes. "The Birth of a Nation" clearly supports racism and the KKK's ideology. The film depicts the members of the KKK in a positive light, and creates the idea that the KKK was doing the right things and that blacks deserved such cruel punishments like aggression and murder.

The only positively depicted blacks were the slaves who after the abolition of slavery stayed with their former masters, blacks who were loyal and obedient to their masters and did not participate in rebellions. Such behavior of blacks white Southerners considered perfect not only during the time of Reconstruction, but well into the twentieth century.

5 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1917-1928

The United States entered the First World War on 6 April 1917 with the purpose of defeating the Germans and thereby ensuring peace in Europe, in the name of democracy and justice. An enormous number of soldiers was needed in Europe, so the U.S. government, though not very willingly, started to recruit black soldiers. These soldiers were discriminated against in the army, even during the war. Segregation in the army caused such serious problems that the recruitment of blacks had to be stopped for a while. Nevertheless, more and more soldiers were needed in European battlefields, prompting the U.S. government to resume recruitment of blacks. Black soldiers constituted thirteen percent of all American soldiers. During the involvement of the U.S. in the First World War, 367,000 blacks was recruited, and 200,000 of them fought on the battlefield. President Woodrow Wilson even promised the blacks that after the war they would receive full citizenship rights. The spokesmen of the second Ku Klux Klan, however, declared that the blacks who fought in the First World War would be lynched if they expected the abolition of segregation and the end of discrimination after their return home. Blacks wearing American military uniforms made whites very angry. The uniform constituted a symbol of national pride, and the white Southerners perceived blacks as absolutely unfit to represent the United States. Southern whites were not proud of black soldiers. In fact, many whites considered blacks wearing U.S. military uniforms as entirely unacceptable.⁵⁵

The actions of Americans- to declare the need to defend democracy and to deny democracy to its own black population- were paradoxical. The equal rights guaranteed to all U.S. citizens and democracy itself obviously did not mean the same thing to the white Americans of that time.

On 12 February, 1909, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the civil rights organization, was founded. But hard times for blacks soon followed- the response of white supremacists to the foundation of the NAACP- the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan, which originated in Georgia in 1915, meant real trouble for Southern blacks. Thus, in the treatment of blacks there could be observed two contending powers. Likewise in the perceptions of blacks there could be observed two completely different positions represented by these two organizations.

⁵⁵ Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*, 80-82.

Whites were unhappy with the NAACP, but black war veterans angered them even more. Blacks wearing uniforms reminded older white generations of Radical Reconstruction, and provoked white radicals to violence. The members of the Ku Klux Klan complained that blacks were being too ambitious and arrogant, or “uppity.” One of the leaders of the second KKK based in Georgia, known simply as Simmons, declared in 1921 that the KKK kept “niggers” in their place. Strong aversion to any modification of race relations also characterized the ideology of the KKK. The KKK claimed that to listen to the requirements of blacks would cause the destruction of the racial hierarchy. Another leader of the Georgian Ku Klux Klan, Evans, claimed that it was not necessary to argue about the race equality as average white Americans did not believe in it. Evans even went on to argue that the author of the Emancipation Proclamation demanded equality only for whites. The supporters of the KKK's ideology claimed that the poverty of blacks was caused by the race-degeneracy of blacks and denied the former enslavement and racial discrimination as a possible cause of black poverty. The KKK characterized blacks as “biologically inferior, incapable of participating in democracy, criminal and immoral, obsessed with sex and so on.” The KKK started to be obsessed with the idea of a black man lusting after a white woman. They claimed that miscegenation would create a “population of bastards.” This view could be observed even in the antebellum era, claimed by the so-called scientists of that period, demonstrating that the attitude towards miscegenation had not changed for a very long time and that for a very long time it was believed that the blacks could pollute the racial purity of whites.⁵⁶

White racists disliked the NAACP and black war veterans as they both could threaten white supremacy, and consequently the whole social order. Southern whites were very conservative, and many of them were nostalgic about the time of slavery, when slaves obeyed their masters and did not cause problems. Southern whites did not desire any changes in the social order. They wanted to keep the status of a superior, noble race for themselves, and both the black war veterans and the NAACP could thwart whites' plans connected with a future characterized and shaped by the white supremacy.

⁵⁶ Nancy MacLean, *Pod maskou ušlechtilosti: Ku-klux-klan po první světové válce*. Translated by Marie Jungmannová. Prague: BB/art, 2007. Originally published as *Behind the Mask of Chivalry: The Making of the Second Ku Klux Klan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 50, 166, 169, 170, 172, 173, 181, 183.

The reaction of the Ku Klux Klan to the return home of the black war veterans was terribly violent. Sixty-two lynchings occurred in 1918, which was twenty-four more than in 1917. The period after the First World War was the period of the worst and the most terrible race antagonism towards blacks in their history. Seventy-seven lynchings of blacks occurred in 1919. Ten of the victims were black soldiers, and some of them were lynched in their military uniforms. Eleven blacks were burnt to death. From May to December 1919 twenty-six race conflicts occurred, during which the police did not even try to protect black people. These terrible acts of violence towards blacks were instigated by the fact that the black soldiers wanted to gain equal rights as promised by the U.S. government before the blacks were recruited. These events clearly demonstrate that the white Southerners were not willing to acknowledge the rights of blacks, or show appreciation for their courage fighting in the war. Most Southern whites only wanted blacks to be kept in the inferior position, and they were capable of almost anything to get their way.⁵⁷

The Great Migration of blacks continued in the 1920s. Between 1910 and 1930 more than one million blacks migrated to the North from the Black Belt states. Blacks migrated to the Midwest and the West too, in order to seek job opportunities and also to escape racism, as in the South racism was extreme. The reaction of the Southern whites to the migration of blacks was mixed. Mainly the businessmen who depended upon cheap labor supported the migration of blacks to urban centers. Because of the growing labor crisis in the South, “white businessmen and politicians imposed migration fees on blacks” and these fees “were enforced by state officials.” Blacks were often even arrested when caught escaping from the South. Governor Kilby of Alabama tried to reduce the migration “by attempting slight improvements in farming conditions” for blacks. On the other hand, white supremacists welcomed the migration of blacks and insured its continuation by “resurrecting the KKK and instituting harsher black codes,” and “the American Federation of Labor (AFL) began to exclude black workers from the abundance of industrial jobs with employers like Tennessee Coal, Iron & Railroad Company.”⁵⁸

The racial antagonism of the white supremacists was really deep-seeded, as they so eagerly supported the migration of blacks to the North, or, more precisely, they forced blacks to

⁵⁷ Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*, 83-85.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 83; Encyclopedia of Alabama, “Great Migration From Alabama,” <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1435> (accessed March 18, 2010).

migrate to the North by very oppressive forms of job discrimination. The fact that the number of lynchings was enormous in the 1920s also contributed to the wish of blacks to migrate to the North, as they did not feel safe in the South. Then the migration fees were imposed on blacks, as whites needed blacks to work in the South. The white Southerners manipulated blacks as they wished, and by restricting blacks from migrating to the North they violated the freedom of movement for persons. Nevertheless, the white Southerners deprived blacks of their civil rights, and this was just one of the many ways of oppression of blacks. The white Southerners perceived blacks as inferior a fact that justified manipulating them and telling them what they could and what they could not do.

According to Robert A. Gibson from Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, “Lynchings occurred throughout the United States; it was not a sectional crime,” but “the great majority of lynchings in the United States took place in the Southern and border states.” Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish economist, in his work *An American Dilemma* stated that “The Southern states account for nine-tenths of the lynchings. More than two-thirds of the remaining one-tenth occurred in the six states which immediately border the South: Maryland, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Kansas.”⁵⁹

In 1919, the Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) was founded in the U.S. South by both whites and blacks. The CIC opposed lynching and other violence against blacks. The CIC also wanted to improve interracial relations. Women and university students were the most zealous white supporters of the CIC, but it was tough to persuade others to drop their harsh treatment of blacks. Will Alexander, the chief executive officer of the CIC, claimed that many whites still thought that it was “less disgraceful to kill a black man than to eat with him.” Nevertheless, the CIC supported segregation, racial restriction in voting and the purity of the white race. Although the Commission on Interracial Cooperation opposed violence against blacks, it did not believe in racial equality. Members still perceived blacks as inferior. As a result they wanted to remain separate from them, and thought that miscegenation would do harm to the white race. This was the problem of many abolitionists and of many members of the CIC as well- the elitism of the whites, the believe in their superiority and black inferiority. They did not

want blacks to be hurt physically, but they did not care too much if blacks were hurt psychologically. They wanted to get rid blacks of the physical pain, but they despised them, which caused psychological pain to blacks. This would be the most painful and humiliating element of the Jim Crow laws and the segregation for blacks- the awareness that they were wanted as workers (as they constituted the source of cheap labor) but they were not wanted to be the brothers of whites, to be equal to them.⁶⁰

Another proof that white Southerners still perceived blacks as inferior was the fact that there were no punishments for lynching blacks. Between the years 1882 and 1934 more than five thousand lynchings occurred, and the victims were mostly Southern black men. During the approximately same period there were at least 549 lynchings in Georgia, of whom 510 were blacks. Nevertheless, between the years 1885 and 1922 the state of Georgia prosecuted for lynching only one person. Lynchings were usually mob activities and as such were difficult to punish. In any case, to allow the whites to commit crimes on blacks without punishment did not fit the image of a civilized state, even if the whites believed that they were protecting civilization through their actions.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Robert A. Gibson, "The Negro Holocaust: Lynching and Race Riots in the United States, 1880-1950," Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1979/2/79.02.04.x.html#b> (accessed April 25, 2010).

⁶⁰ MacLean, *Pod maskou ušlechtilosti*, 52, 165.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 57.

6 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1929-1940

The stock market crash occurred in October 1929, and the Great Depression began. The first victims of the Great Depression were the working masses of blacks. In fact, during the period from 1929 to 1932 the unemployment of blacks was two times higher than the unemployment of whites, and the wages of black workers were a third lower than the wages of white workers. Blacks also had to face the racial antagonism and violence that was a product of increased competition in the job market. Between the years 1929 and 1932 150 blacks were lynched. Blacks did not have the same economic opportunities as whites, and the school fees at the high schools and universities were high which prevented the young blacks from receiving quality education.⁶²

Employment discrimination did not constitute a new phenomenon. During the Great Depression, employers often made the decision whom to hire and fire as much according to skin color as to working capability or efficiency. Demonstrating that blacks were still perceived as inferior and less important. Another feature which could be observed was the fact that the racial integrity was still felt very strongly. The white employers rather fired blacks, as whites were found superior by themselves. This treatment of blacks was called “*Herrenvolk* democracy” by the sociologist Pierre L. van den Berghe who described “*Herrenvolk* democracies” as “regimes like those of the United States or South Africa that are democratic for the master race but tyrannical for the subordinate groups.” As historian George Fredrickson stated, “... the ideology of “*Herrenvolk* democracy” began as a defense of slavery widely accepted in the antebellum South.”⁶³

The doctrine of “*Herrenvolk* democracy” was used even during the 20th century as justification for job discrimination. The fact that the salary of blacks was lower, points out that whites still perceived blacks as somebody who could be manipulated and also discriminated, as somebody who did not deserve the equal treatment as whites.

According to C. Vann Woodward, the character of race relations during the Great Depression was different from the previous description:

Tension between the races eased somewhat during the 'thirties while both white and colored people grappled with the problems of the Great Depression. ...

⁶² Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*, 85, 86.

⁶³ Fredrickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind*, 61, 323.

Interracial violence, particularly lynching, declined markedly. ... Then, quite abruptly and unaccountably- or so it seemed to many Southern white people- an avalanche of denunciation, criticism, and opprobrium descended upon the South from above the Mason and Dixon line. Militant and organized demands from both Negro and white sources of pressure were raised for immediate abolition of segregation. ... Coming on the heels of what some Southerners had considered a period of relative progress in racial relations, the demands seemed the more unreasonable and unfair.⁶⁴

White Southerners were very conservative people. They did not welcome change, especially significant and quick change such as the abolition of segregation and the consequent changes or shifts in the social order. They clung to white supremacy, still perceiving blacks as inferior and still wanting to be separated from them.

As Arthur Franklin Raper wrote in 1936: “The ownership of the best land [in the South] is in the hands of a comparatively small group of white families; landlessness and chronic dependence is the lot of over half the white families and nearly nine-tenths of the colored.” Basically, the southern whites were not willing to sell land to blacks, as land meant power, and Southern whites did not want blacks to have the power. Allowing this would cause certain undesirable shifts in the social order.⁶⁵

Discrimination against blacks in the South even occurred in the sphere of welfare benefits: between 1928 and 1934 the sum distributed in Greene County, Georgia, decreased by 16 percent for white children but 40 percent for black children. The message was quite clear there- the white children were worth saving and taking care of, not the black children. Whites, who held the position of power in Southern society, protected themselves and were willing to sacrifice non-whites.⁶⁶

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democratic president elected in 1932, saw the New Deal as the way out of the Great Depression. Historian Steve Valocchi, however, blames Democratic southern planters for “putting the brakes on many of the provisions of the New Deal that would nationalize relief programs or undercut segregation and a caste system of labor.” He also stated that “the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) was intended for the depressed agricultural sector of the economy” but “Many black sharecroppers who should

⁶⁴ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 118-119.

⁶⁵ Arthur F. Raper, *Preface To Peasantry: A Tale Of Two Black Belt Counties* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), 3.

⁶⁶ Haywood, *Za osvobození černochů*, 61.

have received [AAA] reimbursements never received them because these reimbursements were held by the planters as payment for rents, or by store owners as payment for bills, or were never distributed by local officials. What were common discriminatory practices in the South were sanctioned by and institutionalized in national legislation.” Attempts were made to fight against racial discrimination, such as making lynching a federal offense, eliminating the poll tax in southern states, and eliminating racial segregation in the armed forces, but each attempt was “resisted in Congress through filibusters by southern Democrats.” Southerners were always ready to use discrimination to keep blacks poor and in an inferior position. They perceived blacks just as a cheap source of labor, and nothing more. Keeping blacks poor also meant keeping them dependant, thus making it possible to impose unfavorable conditions upon them. The rich white Southerners did not want their supremacy threatened. Attempts to eliminate the poll tax or racial segregation in the armed forces threatened the status quo, and the whites, who reigned in the South, desired to keep their status at all costs.⁶⁷

Blacks had to face many iniquities and Republican President Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) did not help. Instead he supported a 'lily-white' party in the South. As a result, blacks were offered little protection against discrimination. During his administration blacks were the “last hired and first fired.”⁶⁸

As a result, there occurred a significant shift in the affiliation of blacks. As historian James Sears notes, “... the major reasons blacks abandoned the Republicans and voted for Roosevelt and the New Deal were the alienation by Hoover and the Republicans, the hope for a better life through employment to which the New Deal catered, the pro-Roosevelt black leadership, and the tremendous charisma of Roosevelt among blacks. ... Yet despite ... the repeated failure of the New Deal to produce all that was expected, the black vote remained in the Democratic column.”⁶⁹

Southern whites, mainly white men, later started to support the Republican party, as women, blacks, and Hispanics in the South started to support the Democratic party. Since the 1950s Southern one-party system (Democratic) started to turn into two-party system

⁶⁷ Steve Valocchi, “The Racial Basis of Capitalism and the State, and the Impact of the New Deal on African Americans,” *Social Problems* 41, no. 3 (August 1994): 348, 352, 353, 355.

⁶⁸ James M. Sears, “Black Americans and the New Deal,” *The History Teacher* 10, no. 1 (November 1976): 91-92.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 102-103.

(Democratic and Republican). Southern white women were apparently more willing to drop their racist attitudes and consider equality between blacks and whites than Southern white men.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Merle Black, "The Transformation of the Southern Democratic Party," *The Journal of Politics* 66, no. 4 (November 2004): 1001-1017.

7 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1941-1954

When the Second World War broke out in Europe in September 1939, the United States were dealing with its own problems- racial conflicts, racial discrimination and segregation. The racial conflicts were very dangerous for the U.S., as the war demanded unity. The U.S. entered the Second World War in December 1941. The Second World War was the war for democracy, but in the U.S. the blacks, who constituted ten percent of the U.S. population, were oppressed in their own country. Discrimination against blacks continued during the WW2 and was upheld even in the factories working on the state war orders. The U.S. army also discriminated, yet in spite of this blacks joined the U.S. army. By 1 August 1945, there were more than one million blacks in the military, comprising nine percent of the whole. Yet, ninety percent of these blacks were assigned to general labor, while only ten percent participated in combat units. Black soldiers were also denied promotions. At the end of the Second World War, less than one percent of black soldiers were commissioned officers, as opposed to 11 percent of whites. These were not the only signs of racism in the army. Another shockingly harsh practice was not to allow black donors to give their blood to wounded white soldiers. Black soldiers were terrorized in the U.S., especially in the South. In March 1943 a policeman in Little Rock, Arkansas, killed a black sergeant. In the same year, a sheriff of Genterville, Mississippi, shot a black soldier.⁷¹

Whites perceived blacks as so inferior and, perhaps, dirty, that even when it came to the matters of life and death, they stayed relentless. No other explanation of the rejection of black blood-donors makes sense, nor does the terrorizing of black soldiers upon their return home. The risks these blacks took in the way fighting for country and freedom, clearly meant little to whites. Even joining the army to protect the country where a white man reigned was a sacrifice that went unnoticed. Blacks were fighting for their country, even though they were oppressed, discriminated, and humiliated by whites here. The racism of those who were able to kill black soldiers who protected their country was so deep-seeded that it was impossible to measure or describe. No significant change in this area occurred in the South since the First World War. White Southerners, many of them, still could not stand the sight of black soldiers in U.S. uniform. To serve in the army, to hold high-ranking positions in the army, and to achieve honours meant the elevation of blacks to a higher

⁷¹ Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*, 86-88.

status. This was something whites did not want for blacks; they wanted to keep blacks in an inferior position, especially in the South.

The proof that whites felt no gratitude towards black soldiers was demonstrated by the fact that after the end of the Second World War in the U.S. there were segregation laws in public places valid in seventeen states, and in fourteen states there were segregation laws valid in transportation. In the southern states school segregation was still very rigid, and the black worker made half of what the white worker made for the same work. The migration of blacks still continued. The blacks migrated from the South to the North and the West and from the countryside to the cities. In the U.S. South the number of tenants and agricultural wage workers decreased dramatically after the war. Nevertheless, blacks were still discriminated against in the work force, especially in management or well-paid positions. The justification for this was that the majority of blacks was, according to the business owners, less intelligent than whites and that blacks were less educated and the level of their expertise was lower. The belief in black intellectual inferiority was perseverent and deep-seeded. The progress of science did not destroy the racial prejudice. Blacks found themselves in a vicious circle- the employers did not want to engage blacks to the higher positions as they considered blacks to be less educated and less intelligent than whites, and blacks were less educated because of segregation and worse conditions and lower quality of black schools, as less money was spent on black schools.⁷²

Historian C. Vann Woodward notes Howard W. Odum's description of the atmosphere in the U.S. South in the 1940s, when the white Southerners were anxious because of the pressure from the Northerners who wanted the segregation in the South to be abolished: "The flying rumors of plot and counterplot, of bands armed with icepick and switch-blade knife, of Eleanor Clubs, conspiratorial societies, and subversive Northern agitators often recall the fevered frame of mind that possessed the South in the winter following the Harpers Ferry raid." Odum, a sociologist, claimed that "the South and the Negro in the early 1940's, faced their greatest crisis since the days of the reconstruction." John Temple Graves agreed, stating: "A fact as sure as science, is that the white majorities of the South are unwavering and total in their determination not to have race segregation abolished." Mark Ethridge concurred: "There is no power in the world- not even in all the mechanized

⁷² Ibid., 89-92.

armies of the earth, Allied and Axis- which could now force Southern white people to the abandonment of the principle of social segregation.” C. Vann Woodward later explained that the reality was not as dark as were the predictions: “In fact, the point in the mid-'forties that was so confidently proclaimed to be the *ne plus ultra* of Southern tolerance actually marked the beginning of the period of most rapid advance against the walls of segregation that has yet been made-an advance that does not yet appear to have been halted.” The Southerners were indeed both very angry with and very tired of northern intervention, which was distinguished by the pressure and the desire for immediate abolition of segregation. Yet white Southerners remained conservative and disrespectful of change.⁷³

On 26 July, 1948, President Harry S. Truman issued executive order 9981 stating that “there shall be equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion or national origin.” In December 1952 the Democratic United States Attorney General claimed: “It is in the context of the present world struggle between freedom and tyranny that the problem of racial discrimination must be viewed ... Racial discrimination furnishes grist for the Communist propaganda mills, and it raises doubt even among friendly nations as to the intensity of our devotion to the democratic faith.” In 1954 a Supreme Court decision outlawed school segregation. The Secretary of State declared that “The segregation of school children on a racial basis is one of the practices in the United States which has been singled out for hostile foreign comment in the United Nations and elsewhere. Other peoples cannot understand how such a practice can exist in a country which professes to be a staunch supporter of freedom, justice, and democracy.” People outside the United States were absolutely dismayed to discover the existence and practice of Jim Crow laws in the U.S. To combat this loss of respect, “One of several stratagems employed to recover lost ground has been the appointment of numbers of Negroes to posts in the Foreign Service of the [State] Department.” So segregation was not abolished to improve the situation of black U.S. citizens, but because the U.S. needed to cooperate with and have allies among the members of the United Nations. Blacks were again used as a political tool, in this case to improve the political relationship of the U.S. and other countries. The Red Scare gravely threatened Americans at that time, and they were trying to do everything they could to oppose

⁷³ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 119-121.

Communist propaganda. After all the years when blacks were slaves, served as a source of cheap labor, were discriminated against and segregated, humiliated and despised, desegregation laws were passed not to compensate for all the suffering of black people-U.S. citizens- but to please the possible allies living outside the United States, and to disarm the enemies of the U.S., who were using black inequality as an example of the failures of American-style democracy.⁷⁴

School segregation was outlawed in 1954, nevertheless, in that year in eleven states of former Confederacy only 2.4% of black children attended the schools designed for whites. In the schools designed for blacks there were far worse conditions than in the schools designed for whites. Segregation in schooling not only humiliated the blacks, but it also inhibited them as black children were deprived of the minimum educational requirements. White Southerners still clung to the idea that blacks would remain a source of cheap labor, as many Southerners believed that blacks were good only for manual work. Many white Southerners still perceived blacks as less intelligent than whites so education was, according to them, useless for blacks. It was not important whether the white Southerners really believed in black intellectual inferiority or just used that doctrine to justify the discrimination of blacks, because such a treatment of blacks was in both cases still unfair and elitist.⁷⁵

The sphere of education constituted not the only area where the elitism of whites could be observed. The army was another sound example. During the Korean War black soldiers were integrated into white forces. Nevertheless, this occurred only because of a “critical shortage of white troops” and as “one regimental commander in Korea” put it, the “force of circumstances” made him integrate. Blacks could fight only when the ‘force of circumstances’ occurred. This clearly demonstrated that the white soldiers did not trust the black soldiers, probably because of the elitism of whites and the belief in white superiority and the ability of whites to be better at everything.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Ibid., 132, 133, 136.

⁷⁵ Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*, 100.

⁷⁶ Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, 137.

8 WHITE SOUTHERNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF BLACKS, 1955-1965

On 1 December, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, Rosa Parks refused to obey a bus driver's order that she give up her seat to make room for white passenger. She was arrested, prompting the Montgomery Bus Boycott. This was the day when “42,000 black residents of Montgomery began a year-long boycott of city buses [...] to protest racially segregated seating.”⁷⁷ The Civil Rights Movement began. It was high time for blacks to say enough, to stop obeying whites' orders and rules. Rosa Parks wanted to fight for the equality of blacks and whites. She thought about herself as a full-valued member of society. She did not permit the doctrine of white supremacy and the humiliating practice of racial segregation to destroy her human dignity. She believed in herself and in what she was doing. It was very brave to do what she did, and it was brave of all the participants in the Boycott, as the white racists laughed at them, insulted them, threatened, and terrorized them:

Many white supremacists joined the White Citizens Council, one of many racist citizens' organizations that gained power throughout the South in the 1960s. Convinced that there was an outside mastermind of the movement, they focused their attention on terrorizing boycott leaders. Vigilante groups set off bombs at black homes and churches.⁷⁸

It is interesting indeed that many whites believed that the impulse which started up the Montgomery Bus Boycott came from abroad. Perhaps, the white supremacists simply could not understand how humiliating the segregation was for blacks and that blacks could not stand it any more. Or, the white supremacists thought that blacks simply did not deserve equal treatment as whites and the access to the facilities of the same quality as those designed for whites. The parts of segregated facilities designed for blacks were of lower quality than those designed for whites, and blacks could not stand the injustice and injury any more. It was time to say enough.⁷⁹

Among the participants of the bus boycott there were Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Abernathy, Hugo Black, James F. Blake, and many others. The obstacles created by white supremacists were immense. On 30 January, 1956, Martin Luther King, Jr.'s house was

⁷⁷ Africanaonline, “Montgomery Bus Boycott,” Black American History, a history of black people in the United States, <http://www.africanaonline.com/montgomery.htm> (accessed April 4, 2010).

⁷⁸ Ibid.

bombed. His ten-week-old baby was in the house. The Montgomery City Commission offered a reward of \$500 for the capture and conviction of the persons who bombed King's home. Mayor W. A. Gayle declared: "We do not condone such acts of violence under any conditions in our community. The persons who committed this terrible crime should be punished to the fullest extent of the law." Martin Luther King Jr.'s house was not the only object of bombing. On 25 August, 1956, the home of Robert Graetz, a white Lutheran clergyman who supported the Montgomery Bus Boycott and was a member of the MIA board (Montgomery Improvement Association, formed on 5 December, 1955, instrumental in guiding the Boycott), was bombed. The cling to white supremacy was so strong in the case of some racists that even terrorism became a viable option. The elevation of blacks was perceived as such a disaster to especially the southern community that white Southerners tried to prevent it from happening by all means. In the newspaper article published in the *Montgomery Advertiser* on 24 January, 1956 there was written: "Mayor W. A. Gayle declared yesterday there will be no more discussions with the Negro boycott leaders until they are ready to end the boycott. The mayor declared [...] that the vast majority of whites in Montgomery do not care whether a Negro ever rides a bus again if it means that the social fabric of our community is to be destroyed so that the Negroes will start riding buses again." On one hand, the white Alabamians believed in racial integrity among whites and opposed any changes in the social order which desegregation would bring, on the other hand, because blacks had not travelled by buses more than one year, the transportation companies earned much less money which also constituted a serious problem. As for the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the white supremacists lost the battle- the U.S. Supreme Court declared that the Alabama and Montgomery laws requiring segregated buses were unconstitutional, as of 20 December, 1956.⁸⁰

Another area of conflict between the races was the educational system. In the *Montgomery Advertiser* there was written on 2 February, 1956: "Arthurine J. Lucy, first

⁷⁹ Africanaonline, "Montgomery Bus Boycott," Black American History, a history of black people in the United States, <http://www.africanaonline.com/montgomery.htm> (accessed April 4, 2010).

⁸⁰ Montgomeryadvertiser.com, "City Offers \$500 Reward In Bombing," The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/newsfronts_03.htm (accessed April 4, 2010); Montgomeryadvertiser.com, "Mayor Stops Boycott Talk," The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/newsfronts_02.htm (accessed April 4, 2010).

Negro to be admitted to the University of Alabama, completed formal registration today, but was denied a dormitory room and the right to eat in University dining halls.” Lucy's attorney, Arthur Shores, claimed that he was “contemplating legal proceedings to gain her these privileges” and that he was “considering further legal action in connection with the University's refusal to accept a second Negro applicant,” Polly Ann Hudson, who was denied entrance because her “conduct and marital record have been such that she does not meet the admission standards of the University.” White supremacists tried to make the blacks' fight for equality as difficult as possible. To allow a black girl to attend the University and allow her to use all the facilities unsegregated indeed meant the elevation of her status, in fact, it meant equality, and that was absolutely unacceptable for many white Southerners. They perceived blacks as inferior and wanted to keep them in the inferior position. The desegregation, blacks studying at the universities together with whites, would mean the defeat of the white supremacist dogma. Whites started to panic as they observed that the practice of white supremacy was threatened and they did not hesitate to use violence against blacks to maintain white supremacy.⁸¹

President Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered federal troops to enter Arkansas to avert a risk of an impending massacre which could be caused by whites opposing school desegregation. This action angered many whites in southern states. On 25 January, 1958, the Democratic Party of Alabama declared that the President's action, sending troops with bayonets to Arkansas to compel white and black children to go to the same school, was against the law. Alabama Democrats also stated that the President's act broke the peace between blacks and whites and perhaps destroyed the friendly relationship between the two races. They declared that the Alabama blacks noted the most significant progress in their history under voluntary and peaceful racial segregation. This was not a valid description. In the 1950s discrimination and segregation were very rigid in the U.S. South. As for the segregation in schooling, the whites retained it in the bulk of the southern educational system. In those schools which were desegregated, whites tried by all means to discredit the black students. In January 1958 the Virginia governor talked about the “musty odor of sadism, sex, and immorality” of the desegregated schools in Columbia County [Georgia]

⁸¹ Montgomeryadvertiser.com, “Negro Entry Denied Dorm, Dining Hall At University,” The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/newsfronts_04.htm (accessed April 4, 2010).

and other southern districts. Georgian senator German Talmage described desegregation in schooling and actions connected with it as “one of the greatest tragedies which affected the United States in the modern period.” Alabama Democrats described segregation as mutual, but they never asked blacks for their opinion or permission. That is why segregation could not be described as voluntary. The white Southerners' perception of blacks as dirty and lustful creatures as demonstrated by the Virginia governor's comments, was very deep-seeded and the obsession with the idea of black men lusting after white women, as well as strictly anti-miscegenation attitudes, could still be observed in the minds of white Southerners. This obsession appeared after the abolition of slavery and did not disappear even in the second half of the twentieth century.⁸²

The wrath of white supremacists was terrible in the South at that time- in Georgia in February 1956, a black officer of NAACP was killed. In two years seven blacks were killed in Mississippi. In the period between 1955 and 1958 there were at least 530 terrorist acts (of which 29 resulted in the death of the victim) in the U.S. South. Not one of the murderers was prosecuted. According to a survey by the Harris Institute, 88 percent of white Americans did not want to share a neighbourhood with blacks. A considerable number of white southern bluecollar workers supported the election campaigns of racists. On 25 March, 1960, Edward Brewster, a white lecturer from Memphis, Texas wrote a letter to President Eisenhower, describing the arrests of black students in Memphis for trying to visit a segregated library and museum. He also described the firing of black students from temporary jobs for participating in the fight against racial discrimination. The violence against blacks and the elevation of blacks were interrelated. As whites found out that they were losing their fight for white supremacy and black inferiority, they were increasingly violent towards blacks and the supporters of the Civil Rights Movement. And the revenge for losing the battle was very often harsh. Whites wanted to retain segregation and they even wanted to live as far from blacks as possible.⁸³

Another phenomenon that white supremacists could not stand was the formation of the black middle class. The white supremacists wanted to keep blacks in the inferior position, in a position as low as possible, and the black middle class constituted victory over these efforts. William Wilson stated:

⁸² Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*, 100-101.

The growth of the black middle class was concurrent with the growth of the black urban population. [...] The middle-class segment of an oppressed minority is most likely to participate in a drive for social justice that is disciplined and sustained. [...] Still, despite the fact that some blacks were able to upgrade their occupation and increase their education and income, there were severe limits on the areas in which blacks could in fact advance. [...] The black doctor, lawyer, teacher, minister, businessman, mortician, excluded from the white community, was able to create a niche in the segregated black community.⁸⁴

Blacks ceased to be represented only in the working class. Yes, the white racists were trying to give black middle class a hard time, but still- the blacks started to obtain more lucrative jobs, not only those most undesirable as before. And that was a very significant change and whites could do nothing about it, which sparked outrage.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson on July 2. It “prohibited discrimination in public places, provided for the integration of schools and other public facilities, and made employment discrimination illegal. This document was the most sweeping civil rights legislation since Reconstruction.” Many whites were furious. They were definitely losing the battle, but they were not willing to give up yet.⁸⁵

In the South, desegregation was not peaceful. During the 1950s and 1960s there occurred the rise of the third Ku Klux Klan. The members of the 3rd KKK opposed desegregation, the Civil Rights Movement, and also the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1963 in Alabama the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church killed four children. In 1964 in Mississippi civil rights workers Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner were murdered. In 1966 in Mississippi, the home of Vernon Dahmer Sr., the NAACP leader, was bombed. He was severely burned and died in the hospital. Members of the Ku Klux Klan were convicted of these crimes. It was no wonder that the schools in the South remained segregated for a long time after it was made unconstitutional, as the fury of whites scared blacks so much that they rather attended schools where blacks constituted the majority as it was safer to do so. Whites in the South tried to explain continuing segregation in schooling as a habit which

⁸³ Ibid., 104, 107, 111.

⁸⁴ William J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 18, 20.

was convenient to both races, but the truth was that whites terrorized blacks when they tried to attend a school where whites had a majority to prevent them from trying it again.⁸⁶

In February 1965 Malcolm X was shot to death. In August 1965 Congress passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965, making illegal the discriminatory voting practices that had restricted blacks from voting, such as poll taxes or literacy tests. In June 1967 the Supreme Court outlawed prohibiting interracial marriage. On April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee, Martin Luther King, Jr., a man who was proclaiming peace in the fight against racism, was assassinated. In April 1968 President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968, prohibiting discrimination in housing. With this final stroke of the pen, blacks had full legal rights for the first time in U.S. history.

White Southerners were very conservative. Their racism towards blacks was deep-seeded, as was their belief in white supremacy. Desegregation meant an absolute change in their lives. White Southerners were not willing to accept and undergo the shifts in the social order that the abolition of discriminatory practices brought. And because they were forced to do so by the federal government, and because they were losing control over blacks, some whites grew to hate blacks even more.

⁸⁵ www.ourdocuments.gov, "Civil Rights Act (1964)," Our Documents, <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=old&doc=97> (accessed April 5, 2010).

⁸⁶ Infoplease.com, "Civil Rights Timeline," <http://www.infoplease.com/spot/civilrightstimeline1.html> (accessed April 24, 2010).

9 PROTESTS AGAINST DESEGREGATION

Desegregation was a gradual process, as desegregation laws were enacted in different years. Nor was it always a peaceful process. And in the U.S. South, desegregation was not a peaceful process at all. In the streets of the U.S. South there were riots, bombings, shootings, murderings, all possible forms of violence. Acts of violence against the supporters of the Civil Rights Movement, both black and white, were used to impede the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation. But the white supremacists ultimately lost the battle. There was a sufficient amount of people who opposed the doctrine of white supremacy, who believed in the equality of whites and blacks. Thus, the white supremacists' acts of violence constituted revenge as well.

The 1950s saw the rise of the third Ku Klux Klan. This Klan was decentralized, consisting of many individual, separate groups. A significant number of these groups opposed the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s. The members of the third KKK committed many crimes, intimidated blacks and also white supporters of the Civil Rights Movement and desegregation, attacked them, injured them, murdered them, and bombed and shot at their homes, schools, and churches. Historians Brown and Webb commented on the situation in the South: "According to the Southern Regional Council, white terrorists bombed the homes of forty black families during 1951 and 1952." Harry Tyson Moore, the founder of the first branch of the NAACP in Brevard County, Florida, was "killed by a bomb planted under his house by Klansmen on Christmas Day 1951." Despite all the protests against desegregation, segregation was made unconstitutional few years later.⁸⁷

Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, decided on 17 May, 1954, claimed that "Segregation of white and Negro children in the public schools of a State solely on the basis of race, pursuant to state laws permitting or requiring such segregation, denies to Negro children the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment - - even though the physical facilities and other "tangible" factors of white and Negro schools may be equal." A year later (on 31 May, 1955), it was decided that "Racial discrimination in public education is unconstitutional, ... and all provisions of federal, state or local law requiring or permitting such discrimination must yield to this principle."

Most white Southerners opposed school desegregation very strongly and were willing to resist the federal mandate to desegregate. The governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, ordered guardsmen in Little Rock on 4 September, 1957, to block the way of black pupils attempting to enter a school designed for whites. The federal government sent troops there, but attempts to desegregate the schools failed. In 1960 in Arkansas 0.1% of black school children attended integrated schools, in Tennessee 1%, in Virginia 0.1%. In six southern states no black pupils attended the schools designed for whites. Because of the hostile Southern whites' reaction to the desegregation in schooling, and their attempts to oppose it, many black pupils were afraid of attending schools where whites constituted the majority.⁸⁸

The desegregation of public transportation was also accompanied with violent protests. On 23 December, 1956, someone fired into Martin Luther King, Jr.'s house. A day later, five white men attacked a 15-year-old black girl at a Montgomery bus stop. On 26 December, 1956, Rosa Jordan, a black woman, was shot in both legs while riding a bus in Montgomery, Alabama. On 10 January, 1957, in opposition to desegregation, two houses and four churches were bombed, and an unexploded bomb was found on the porch of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s parsonage. Whites committed often extremely cruel crimes against blacks and the supporters of the Civil Rights Movement to stop the desegregation. They were very afraid of the possible threat and even defeat of white supremacy and were trying to prevent it from happening by all means. The dogma of white superiority and black inferiority had a very strong hold on many whites, so strong that they were willing to murder in support of it.⁸⁹

On 1 October, 1962, James H. Meredith became the first black student to enroll at the University of Mississippi, but before that, Meredith's admission to the university was opposed both by students and the state officials. There were riots in the streets, and Meredith was threatened with lynching. On 25 September, 1962, the Governor of Mississippi, Ross Robert Barnett, reacting to the will of the majority of his constituents, physically blocked James Meredith's registration at the University of Mississippi. It took armed Federal Marshals to ensure the entrance of James Meredith to the university.

⁸⁷ David Brown and Clive Webb, *Race in the American South: From Slavery to Civil Rights* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007), 272.

⁸⁸ Ivanov, *Nevlastní děti Ameriky*, 102.

⁸⁹ Montgomeryadvertiser.com, "The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott," <http://www.montgomeryboycott.com/timeline.htm> (accessed April 4, 2010).

Then on 12 June, 1963, in Jackson, Mississippi, Medgar Evers, Mississippi's NAACP field secretary, was murdered. Many years later, the white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith was convicted of the murder.

Another governor who very strongly opposed desegregation was George C. Wallace of Alabama. On 14 January, 1963, delivering his inaugural speech in Montgomery, he said: "Let us rise to the call of freedom-loving blood that is in us and send our answer to the tyranny that clanks its chains upon the South. In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny . . . and I say . . . segregation today . . . segregation tomorrow . . . segregation forever." Governor Wallace regarded the federal government's ensurance of desegregation in the South as tyranny, however, he did not consider the long-lasting treatment of blacks when they were discriminated against and oppressed for centuries in the United States, especially in the South, as tyranny. This demonstrates the existence of a double standard in white Southerners' perceptions of race relations. The oppression of blacks was not perceived as tyranny in the eyes of many whites, as they perceived blacks as the inferior race, which had to be controlled and kept in their proper place, a place which whites had chosen for them.⁹⁰

Governor Wallace also took several actions against desegregation. On 11 June, 1963, he personally prevented two black students from registering at the University of Alabama. President John F. Kennedy sent troops to ensure their enrollment, to which the governor reacted by saying: "The unwelcomed, unwanted, unwarranted and force-induced intrusion upon the campus of the University of Alabama today of the might of the Central Government offers frightful example of the oppression of the rights, privileges and sovereignty of this State by officers of the Federal Government." This reaction was extremely paradoxical, as Wallace, a white man who prevented black students from registering, a right guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, was complaining of oppression while at the same time supporting segregation. Wallace, however, did not give up his fight against desegregation so easily. In September 1963, the governor tried again to prevent

⁹⁰ Alabama Department of Archives & History, "The 1963 Inaugural Address of Governor George C. Wallace," The 1963 Inaugural Speech of Governor George Wallace, http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs_list/InauguralSpeech.html (accessed April 2, 2010).

black students from registering, this time at several separate elementary schools in Huntsville, Alabama.⁹¹

All these protests against desegregation proved the fact that white Southerners were not willing to change their opinion on blacks, give up the doctrine of white supremacy, and treat blacks as equals. The protests against desegregation also proved that whites did not even admit that racial segregation and discrimination constituted forms of racial oppression of blacks, and that the whites' treatment of blacks was very far from 'separate but equal.'

⁹¹ Alabama Department of Archives & History, "Statement and Proclamation of Governor George C. Wallace," Governor George C. Wallace's School House Door Speech, http://www.archives.state.al.us/govs_list/schooldoor.html (accessed April 2, 2010).

10 PURPOSES OF SEGREGATION

During the Jim Crow era (1876-1965), segregated facilities could be found in every sphere of human life- buses, cemeteries, hairdresser's, hospitals, hotels, libraries, lunch counters, mental hospitals, militia, parks, playgrounds, prisons, railroads, restaurants, schools, stadiums, telephone booths, theatres, toilets, and waiting rooms. In Alabama, blacks and whites were prohibited to play a game of pool or billiards together. In Louisiana, there were separate ticket offices and entrances for all circuses, shows, and tent exhibitions. In Louisiana, there were separate buildings for the care of blind persons. In North Carolina, the law required that "Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them." In Mississippi a law prohibited any printed promotion of equality of blacks and whites. Some of the Jim Crow laws seem bizzare nowadays, however, people really obeyed these laws during the Jim Crow era.⁹²

The whole system of Jim Crow segregation was very compact, rigorous, and rigid. Jim Crow laws started to be used shortly after the abolition of slavery. Thus, the first purpose of segregation would be the control which whites wanted to have over blacks. So the institution of slavery was replaced by the institution of Jim Crow- one way of control was replaced by another. During the time of slavery blacks were easy to control as they had no rights and could not vote. The white Southerners were aware of that fact, and towards the end of the 19th century the blacks found themselves disfranchised again. This was done by the discriminatory practices such as paying poll taxes- blacks were poor, they were paid badly in their jobs, as there existed also wage discrimination of blacks- so they were not able to pay the poll tax. Another way of preventing blacks from voting were the literacy tests. Black education was not on the same level as the education of whites, and blacks were kept uneducated so they were not able to pass the literacy tests.

Another purpose which was used to reason segregation was the doctrine that segregation supported racial integrity. Segregation also supported the belief in white superiority, as the equipment of the segregated facilities designed for whites was of better quality than that designed for blacks. It was the feeling of elitism of whites that made white people support segregation.

Segregation also meant that whites and blacks did not know much about each other. This effect of segregation met the needs mainly of white supremacists, because when blacks did not know how well-educated or well-paid the whites were, they did not demand the same rights.

The only way to keep blacks as a source of cheap labor was to keep them uneducated or to provide them just a minimal education. This could be accomplished only by teaching white and black children at segregated schools. Whites wanted blacks to do the unskilled labor, the dirty and hard work. As a lawyer from Montgomery, Alabama, put it: "It's a question, who will do the dirty work. In this country the white man won't; the Negro must. There's got to be a mudsill somewhere. If you educate the Negroes they won't stay where they belong; and you must consider them as a race, because if you let a few rise it makes the others discontented." Whites believed that they were the only suitable people to decide where blacks belonged. They were never interested in the blacks' opinion- whites never asked blacks what they wanted or where they wanted to belong.⁹³

Another reason for establishing segregated schools was the fear of whites of the possible elevation of blacks. The elevation of blacks could threaten both the superior social status and economic status of whites. That was why the whites did not desire the equality of races, they desired to keep the superior position for themselves. To be superior meant to have a better job and to be more honourable in the society. In spite of all the doctrines of black intellectual inferiority, whites were scared of the possible competition of educated blacks. Segregation and discrimination in both education and employment were used to prevent blacks from competing with whites.

Another purpose of segregation was to prohibit interracial marriages and miscegenation. White Southerners were obsessed with the idea that black men lusted after white women so it was in their opinion necessary to keep the races separated. Many whites believed that miscegenation would bring the "race of bastards" or even the destruction of the whole society. Whites wanted to keep their race "pure." They believed that miscegenation would pollute their race. Later whites probably ceased to believe that

⁹² Vernellia R. Randall, "Examples of Jim Crow Laws," University of Dayton, <http://academic.udayton.edu/race/02rights/jcrow02.htm> (accessed March 20, 2010).

⁹³ Leon F. Litwack, "The White Man's Fear of the Educated Negro: How the Negro Was Fitted for His Natural and Logical Calling," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, no. 20 (Summer 1998): 105.

miscegenation would cause the destruction of the whole society, but they still perceived miscegenation as a kind of debasement of the white race.

The antagonism of some white racists was so harsh that they desired segregation simply because they despised and hated blacks, perceived them as inferior and dirty, and did not want to see them at all. After the abolition of slavery, many whites desired the deportation of blacks to Africa, and the complete segregation would constitute an alternative solution.

CONCLUSION

White Southerners adopted Jim Crow laws because they believed that blacks were not equal to them and did not deserve equal treatment. White Southerners perceived blacks as inferior during the time of slavery, and this perception continued throughout the era of Jim Crow segregation. The possible elevation of blacks and the consequent changes in social order, including the possibility of some whites being inferior to blacks constituted a great threat for white Southerners, and resulted in severe and sometimes violent protests against desegregation.

It was white Southerners' perceptions of blacks and their resistance to change that led to segregation, the longevity of segregation laws, and the aversion of white Southerners to give up the way of life that Jim Crow segregation preserved.

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