

*The
Struggle for
Black Equality*

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Black Earth
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ONE

Up from Slavery

Nourished by anger, revolutions are born of hope. They are the offspring of belief and bitterness, of faith in the attainment of one's goals and indignation at the limited rate and extent of change. Rarely in history are the two stirrings confluent in a sufficient force to generate an effective, radical social movement. They were in black America by the 1960s.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, few Afro-Americans struggled for racial equality with much optimism. Their efforts to continue the campaign against Jim Crow initiated by the black abolitionists failed to stem the rising crest of white racism after Reconstruction. Largely bereft of white allies, blacks fought on the defensive, trying to hold their limited gains. They lost each battle. Congress permitted the white South to reduce blacks to a state of peonage, to disregard their civil rights, and to disenfranchise them by force, intimidation, and statute. So did the Supreme Court. Writing into the

Constitution its own beliefs in the inferiority of blacks, the late-nineteenth-century high court tightened every possible shackle confining the ex-slaves. Most American scholars cheered this legal counterrevolution which effectively nullified the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. It exemplified their teachings of inherent and irremediable racial differences, and of the folly of governmental tampering with local folkways. Whether appealing to scriptural or scientific evidence, to Darwinism, the gospel of Anglo-Saxonism, or the new interest in eugenics, a generation of clergymen, editors, and educators propounded the intellectual rationalizations for white supremacy.

Not surprisingly, most white Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century believed that, for the good of all, the naturally superior whites should rule over the baser races. They heard or read little to the contrary. The Southern Way had become the American Way. Even the most humanitarian reformers concerned with racial injustice counseled gradualism rather than immediacy. Northern liberals preached the necessity of deferring citizenship for blacks until the freedmen were ready for it; they emphasized the long-term gains to be derived from education, religion, and economic uplift and denigrated strategies predicated on agitation, force, or political activity.

This total acquiescence by government officials and Northern public opinion gave the white South all the permission it needed to institutionalize its white-supremacist beliefs. First came disfranchisement, accomplished in the 1880s mainly through fraud and force. All the Southern states felt emboldened in the next two decades to follow the lead of the 1890 Mississippi state constitutional convention in officially adopting such disenfranchising techniques as poll taxes, "grandfather clauses," literacy and "good character" tests, and white primaries. Black voter registration plummeted 96 percent in Louisiana between 1896 and 1900. The number of Afro-Americans permitted to vote in the new century hovered around 3,500 in Alabama, which had an adult black population of nearly 300,000; and in

Mississippi, with an even larger black population fewer than a thousand blacks voted.

Political impotency bore on every aspect of Afro-American life. Unable to participate in the enactment or enforcement of the law, Southern blacks became increasingly vulnerable to physical assault and murder. Over a thousand were lynched between 1900 and 1915. No records exist to tally the number beaten or tortured. Nor can one describe adequately the terror of living with a constant fear of barbarity and violence, of having your security subject to the whim of those who despise you, of having no recourse to police or courts.

The Southern states, in addition, adopted a host of statutes methodically outlawing everything "interracial." These new segregation laws expressed the white South's all-encompassing belief in the inequality of blacks. Most Southern states now formally required Negroes and whites to be born separately in segregated hospitals; to live their lives as separately as possible in segregated schools, public accommodations, and places of work and recreation; and, presumably, to dwell in the next life separately in segregated funeral homes and cemeteries. The rapid proliferation of Jim Crow laws inspired an irrational competition among Southern legislators to erect ever more and higher barriers between the races. "White" and "Colored" signs sprouted everywhere and on everything. Atlanta mandated Jim Crow Bibles in its courtrooms. Alabama forbade Negroes to play checkers with whites. New Orleans segregated its prostitutes, and Oklahoma, its telephone booths. The lawmakers of Florida and North Carolina saw to it that white students would never touch textbooks used by blacks. Such edicts, branding blacks with an indelible mark of inferiority, could not but demean the spirit of Afro-Americans.

Jim Crow, furthermore, easily led to gross inequities in the distribution of public monies for education and civic services. The eleven Southern states in 1916 spent an average of \$10.32 per white public-school student, and only \$2.89 per black pupil.

There was one hospital bed available for every 139 American whites in the 1920s, but only one for every 1,941 blacks. And that was not all. Southern governments victimized blacks by bestial convict-leasing and chain-gang practices, and confined them to serfdom on the lowest rung of the economic ladder, doing all they could to implement the view of James K. Vardaman, who became Governor of Mississippi in 1904, that "God Almighty had created the Negro for a menial."

And blacks could do little to alter the situation or even to protest loudly. More than 90 percent of the nearly ten million Afro-Americans in 1910 lived in the South, three-quarters of them in rural areas, the vast majority working a white man's land, with a white man's mule and a white man's credit. Theirs was an oppressive, closed society, designed to thwart black advancement and encourage black subservience. All political and economic power remained vested in whites determined to maintain the status quo, however many black lives it cost. Daily facing grinding poverty, physical helplessness, and all the banal crudities of existence under an open, professed, and boasting racism, many blacks grew fatalistic and hopeless. Segregation and discrimination came to seem permanent, immutable, an inevitable condition of life, and the majority of Southern blacks succumbed to the new racial order.

But not all. Some protested by migrating. Between 1890 and 1910, nearly two hundred thousand Southern blacks fled to the North. Others returned to Africa or established autonomous black communities in the West. A few, mostly members of the tiny, Northern black elite, continued the struggle they had inherited from the black abolitionists and from the inspiring vision of equal rights nourished by the Civil War and Reconstruction. They spoke out for racial justice in such organizations as the Afro-American Council, Monroe Trotter's National Equal Rights League, Ida B. Wells's Antilynching League, and the Niagara Movement. Yet few blacks heard their pleas, and fewer whites heeded their demands. These small civil-rights groups of

the early twentieth century, lacking adequate finances, political leverage, influential white allies, access to the major institutions shaping public opinion and policy, and the support of large numbers of blacks, could do virtually nothing to alter the course of American life and thought.

The ascendancy of Booker T. Washington at the turn of the century epitomized both the widespread despair of blacks and the powerlessness of the handful of blacks actively fighting against racial injustice. Although he worked covertly to diminish disenfranchisement and Jim Crow, Washington publicly and repeatedly emphasized the necessity of accommodation, conciliation, and gradualism. Again and again he deprecated political and protest activity aimed at the immediate attainment of civil rights for blacks. "The best course to pursue in regard to civil rights," he often lectured to blacks, "is to let it alone; let it alone and it will settle itself." Thus, when the British author H. G. Wells criticized Jim Crow while on a visit to the United States, Washington answered back: "The only answer to it is for colored men to be patient, to make themselves competent, to do good work, to give no occasion against us." Primarily a spokesman for the leadership of the emerging black middle class, he counseled all blacks to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps. Too few, however, even had boots, and in the years before his death in 1915, Washington's nostrums failed abysmally to alleviate the plight of blacks.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, organized in 1910, fared no better. Declaring its purposes to be "to promote equality of rights and eradicate caste or race prejudice . . . to advance the interests of colored citizens; to secure for them impartial suffrage; and to increase their opportunities for securing justice in the courts, education for their children, employment according to their ability; and complete equality before the law," the interracial NAACP relied on litigation and agitation as the chief means to those ends. Despite two victories at the Supreme Court, which declared unconsti-

later echoed
by Clarence
Thomas

tutional the grandfather clause and city ordinances mandating residential segregation, the association's goals remained an impossible dream during its first quarter of a century. It could not destroy the edifice of discrimination, lessen the rampant prejudice everywhere in the nation, or deter the mushrooming ghettoization of blacks. Because of continuing white indifference and black impotency, the NAACP could do nothing to affect the racial policies of Southern governments or to compel the necessary corrective actions by the national government.

Indeed, no black leader or organization or strategy could stem the tide of discrimination and segregation in the first third of the twentieth century. Powerlessness fostered frustrations. Defeat bred disillusionment. Blacks in the 1920s squabbled among themselves more than they assailed their oppressors.

Certain harbingers of change nonetheless appeared. Most stemmed from the mass migration of blacks to the cities and to the North. Between 1910 and 1920 the "Great Migration" brought more than half a million blacks northward, and another three-quarters of a million blacks fled from the boll weevil and the lynch mob in the 1920s. Many who followed the North Star looking for the Promised Land found hell instead: educational and residential segregation, dilapidated housing milked by white slumlords, discrimination by labor unions and employers, brutality by white policemen, and liquor and narcotics the only means of escape. Yet, for most, the Northern urban ghetto meant surcease from permanent tenantry, poverty, disease, and ignorance, and the first step into the mainstream of the industrial labor force.

Northern Negroes, unlike their Southern brethren, could also vote. In 1928, for the first time in the century, an Afro-American was elected to Congress. Other blacks won local offices in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York City, and Philadelphia, and Negro votes in those cities became a factor in determining election results. Politically, the Negro slowly began to command attention. The bonds of hopelessness of the rigid caste system

of the Black Belt less and less characterized all of black America.

Hope sprouted also from the seeds of spiritual emancipation planted by the literary movement of the 1920s that Afro-Americans labeled the Harlem Renaissance, the Black Renaissance, and the New Negro Movement. Whether celebrating the racial chauvinism of blacks, the identification of Afro-Americans with Africa, or decrying lynchings and discrimination, Negro poets and novelists sought to free themselves from white symbols and images and to write in their own idiom. By focusing white America's attention on blacks, by awakening the pride of Afro-Americans in their race and folk traditions, and by militant protests and demands for civil rights, the New Negro articulated the consciousness of the possibility of change brought about by migration.

So did the NAACP. Led by W. E. B. Du Bois, the brilliant black editor of its monthly journal, *The Crisis*, the NAACP publicized the hostility of organized labor to blacks, rallied against disenfranchisement, and demanded that Congress enact an anti-lynching bill. Despite repeated rebuffs, the NAACP kept aloft the banners of racial equality, and gradually gained adherents among blacks and whites in the cities of the North. Most important, its tactic of complaining loudly and insistently at each manifestation of racism slowly eroded the myth that Southern whites and black accommodators had forged: that blacks were content, even happy, with the status quo; that they did not consider the rights and duties of citizenship vital to black interests; and that they preferred the separation of the races to association with whites.

And so did Marcus Garvey's movement for racial pride and self-determination. Despite his Universal Negro Improvement Association's labeling of Du Bois and the NAACP as worse enemies of the Afro-American than the Ku Klux Klan and its denunciation of all programs promoting interracialism as plots against blacks, Garvey convinced millions of blacks to believe

in their ability to shape their destiny. A master showman, Garvey dramatized the extreme plight of Afro-Americans and the desperate necessity of change. An intuitive psychologist, he radicalized the powerless by instilling in them a sense of their potential power. And as a persuasive teacher, the Jamaican leader convinced masses of Negroes that white racism and not black failings explained their lowly status.

In the 1930s, these stirrings began for the first time to innervate significantly the struggle for black equality. The proponents of civil rights no longer stood alone. They fought alongside radicals pressing for class unity unhampered by racial divisions, labor leaders wanting strong unions, ethnic and political minorities desiring greater security for themselves from a strong central government that would protect constitutional rights, and liberals battling Southern opponents of the New Deal. A growing number of black-rights organizations also benefited from the new ideological consensus emerging in the academic community. It undermined racism by emphasizing the influence of environment on peoples rather than innate characteristics. It stressed the damage done to individuals by prejudice and the costs to the nation of discrimination. It demolished the stereotype of the Afro-American as a contented buffoon. Intellectually, white supremacy was now on the defensive.

Most of all, the New Deal's unprecedented substantive and symbolic aid to blacks stimulated hope for racial changes. With some success, the New Deal insisted on equality of treatment in its relief programs. President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed over a hundred blacks to administrative posts, and the number of Afro-American federal employees tripled in the Depression decade. The Roosevelt Administration began the desegregation of federal rest rooms, cafeterias, and secretarial pools. A host of government publications and conferences made explicit the federal government's responsibility for issues of human rights. Never before, moreover, had a First Lady and so many high-level government officials been associated so closely with civil-

rights groups. On a wide variety of racial issues, the most prominent whites in the nation had started to make legitimate the aspirations of blacks. This was especially true of Roosevelt's appointees to the Supreme Court. Their decisions in the late 1930s increasingly made the Afro-American less a *freedman* and more a *free man*.

Nevertheless, the basic conditions of life for most blacks barely changed in the thirties. Civil rights had begun to emerge as a major national concern but disenfranchisement and discrimination remained the rule, and the "job ceiling" kept blacks in the lowest-paid positions. The majority of whites, enslaved by fear, ignorance, and prejudice, favored neither desegregation nor equal opportunities for blacks. And most blacks, still plagued by poverty and powerlessness, could not yet battle for full citizenship or rebel against the inequities destroying them.

That changed, however, during the Second World War and the years immediately after. The ideological character of the war and the government's need for the loyalty and manpower of all Americans stimulated blacks to demand a better deal. Many responded with a militancy never before seen in black communities. Membership in the NAACP multiplied nearly ten times, to a half a million. The Congress of Racial Equality, organized in 1942, experimented with nonviolent direct action to challenge Jim Crow; and A. Philip Randolph attempted to build his March-on-Washington Committee into an all-black mass protest movement. In 1941, his threat of a massive black march on Washington, combined with the growth of the Afro-American vote and the exigencies of the defense effort, led Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802. The first Presidential directive on race since Reconstruction, it established the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices and prohibited discriminatory employment practices by unions and companies with government contracts or engaged in war-related work. The FEPC and the desperate labor shortage caused by the draft and booming war production resulted in some two million blacks

gaining employment in defense plants and another two hundred thousand entering the federal civil service. By 1945, black membership in labor unions had doubled to 1,250,000.

Still other barriers crumbled during the war. The army integrated its officer-training program and the marines and navy opened their ranks to blacks for a variety of duties other than messmen. Liberals repeatedly emphasized that the practices of white supremacy impeded the war effort and brought into disrepute the stated war aims of the United States. And over seven hundred thousand blacks pulled up stakes in the South to find a new home outside Dixie. By the end of the war, blacks had gained enough from the expansion in jobs and income, from service in the armed forces, and from the massive urbanization of the black population to be able to launch an aggressive assault on racist practices.

But they did not. In part, the Second World War stifled black protest. While discrimination in defense employment and in the armed services had stimulated military early in the war, the prolonged involvement of the United States in what it viewed as a war for survival dampened that militancy. Winning the war as speedily as possible with the least possible loss of American lives overrode all other concerns. Few took kindly to anything that threatened that goal, such as a war against racism at home. The nation demanded unity not division, consensus not conflict. Accordingly, few black leaders after 1942 flirted with any tactic or strategy that might remotely be considered to harm the war effort, and the belligerence of blacks dramatically decreased. The race riots in 1943, particularly in Detroit and Harlem, further frightened the black leadership, causing it to concentrate on reducing black assertive behavior of any kind. "Good Conduct" campaigns and the control of racial rumors took precedence over actively combating segregation and discrimination. A poll by the *Pittsburgh Courier* in the midst of the war showed 71 percent of Afro-Americans opposed to a March on Washington to protest discrimination, a sharp turn from the

mood of 1941. So did the fact that every major civil-rights spokesman and Negro newspaper denounced A. Philip Randolph's 1943 call for civil disobedience against Jim Crow schools and railroads, and that CORE's efforts to involve large numbers of blacks in militant direct action came to naught. Thus, while the war brought revolutionary changes in American life that would eventually make possible a successful black campaign for racial justice, in the short run it hampered the growth of mass black protest.

Also in part, the very steps taken toward racial justice after a half a century of deteriorating race relations beguiled civil-rights leaders. They chose, in the words of a popular song of the day, "to accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative." With pride they ballyhooed the increasing number of "Negro firsts," listing the advances made by individual blacks and the race. Their loud cheers for Jackie Robinson's crossing the color line and his quick rise to star status in major-league baseball drowned out their quiet grumbling at the black Brooklyn Dodger not being allowed to stay in the same hotels as his white teammates and at the overwhelming extent of segregation remaining throughout professional and amateur sports. They made far more of the awards and honors accorded Dr. Julian Perry, the renowned black scientist, than of the news of firebombing of his home by whites who would not accept the presence of a black scientist in their neighborhood. Indeed, while Afro-American spokesmen confidently counted on the benefits to be derived from the migration of blacks northward, the white trek to the suburbs of the North became an exodus. At the close of the 1950s, whites outnumbered blacks in the suburbs by a ratio of more than thirty-five to one. A new color line, just as effective as the old, still kept the United States two nations—separate and unequal.

The Negro press, similarly, went to great lengths to publicize the jump in the number of blacks registered to vote in the South, from 250,000 in 1940 to over a million in 1950, but downplayed

the fact that three out of four adult blacks in Dixie still could not vote. Headlines trumpeted the election of blacks to the governing Councils of Richmond and Nashville in 1948 and 1951. Yet hundreds of counties deprived blacks of any voice in government whatsoever, and blacks throughout the South remained politically powerless. In scores of articles and speeches, moreover, the leadership of civil-rights organizations played up the Negro vote in the North as the "balance of power," and credited it with providing the margin of victory for Harry Truman in 1948. After the election, however, President Truman refused to press Congress to enact civil-rights legislation and did nothing to implement the Supreme Court's 1950 decision against segregation in interstate commerce. Nevertheless, the NAACP's balance sheet in race relations that year, after an impressive compilation of black strides toward the mainstream of American life, concluded optimistically: "Some might call these mere straws in the wind, but they do indicate the direction in which the wind is blowing."

The widespread anticipation of even greater progress in race relations further subdued black anger. Virtually every basic change in American society gave blacks hope that discrimination and segregation would soon be overcome. None was more important than the elephantine growth of the American economy. The Gross National Product rose from \$206 billion in 1940 to \$285 billion in 1950, and then to nearly \$400 billion in 1955. The number of civilian jobs increased from 54 million at the end of World War II to 60 million in 1950, to 63 million in 1955. Personal expenditures leaped in these same years from \$122 million to \$195 million to \$257 million. This spectacular rate of economic growth made possible an increasing income for blacks, their entry into industries and labor unions previously closed to blacks, and a gain in occupational status as the constant shortage of workers necessitated a slackening of restrictive promotion policies. The huge enlargement of the economy, moreover, meant that the advancement of blacks did not have

to come at the expense of whites, thus undermining perhaps the most powerful source of white resistance to black progress.

The effect of economic changes on race relations was particularly marked in the South. The rapid industrialization of Dixie since 1940 ended the dominance of the cotton culture. With it went the need for a vast black underclass of unskilled laborers. Power began to shift from rural areas to the cities, and from tradition-oriented landed families to the new officers and professionals in absentee-owned corporations. Industrialization also accelerated urbanization and the migration to the South of millions of white-collar employees and their families who had little stake in the perpetuation of the rural color-caste system. The "New South," many prophesied, would be far more concerned with profits and economic expansion than with outdated racial mores.

In addition, changes in the economy radically affected black migration. The mechanization of cotton production pushed blacks off the farms and the lure of jobs pulled them to the cities. Over a million would leave the South in the 1940s, and another million and a half in the fifties. This mass migration fundamentally altered the configuration of the race problem. It became national in scope. No longer affecting only one region, it could not now be left in the hands of Southern whites. It also both modified the objective conditions of life for blacks and changed their perceptions of goals and tactics. Freed from the confines of a rigid caste system and subject to urban formative experiences, blacks developed new norms and beliefs. Aggression could be turned against one's oppressor rather than against one's self, more employment and educational opportunities could be secured, and political power could be mobilized. The promise of a better world in the next one would not suffice. The urban black would not wait for his rewards until the afterlife, and enfranchisement promised all in this life that religion did in the next. The New Deal and the Second World War, moreover, had corroded the doctrines of localism and decentralization

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which had blocked all hope for a federal effort to guarantee blacks either civil rights or economic opportunity.

The new prominence of the United States as a world power further presaged black advancement. During World War II, millions of Americans became aware for the first time of the danger of racism to national security. Japan focused on the United States' racist treatment of nonwhites as the core of its propaganda campaign to win the loyalty of the colored peoples of China, India, and Latin America. Each lynching, race riot, and manifestation of Jim Crow during the war was publicized by the Axis as proof of the hypocrisy of President Franklin Roosevelt's Four Freedoms. The costs of racism went even higher during the Cold War. The Soviet Union continuously undercut American appeals to the nations of Africa and Asia by highlighting the ill treatment of blacks in the United States. Rarely in the first two decades after the Second World War did a plea for civil rights before the Supreme Court, on the floor of Congress, or emanating from the White House, fail to emphasize the point that white racism adversely affected our relations with the rest of the world. The rapid growth of independence movements among the world's colored peoples had special significance for Afro-Americans. They proved the feasibility of change and the vulnerability of white supremacy, while at the same time aiding Afro-Americans to see themselves as members of a world majority rather than as a hopelessly outnumbered American minority.

The decline in intellectual respectability of racist ideas also convinced blacks that the winds of change blew their way. The excesses of Nazism and the decline of Western imperialism combined with internal developments in various academic disciplines to discredit the pseudo-scientific rationalizations once popularly accepted as the basis for white supremacy. Books and essays attacking racial injustice and inequality, epitomized by Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma*, dominated discourse on the subject. Racial egalitarianism became a major

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theme in the nation's media and educational systems. And every public-opinion poll and attitude survey after the start of World War II underlined white America's increasing recognition of the harm done to blacks by racism.

These fundamental transpositions made it easy to believe that continued progress would be automatic. At most, just a bit more legal action or political pressure would suffice to usher in a new era in race relations. The demise of Jim Crow would necessitate neither struggle nor sacrifice, neither radical strategies nor disruptive tactics. This faith, obviating the need for mass black direct action, also reflected the conservative American mood after World War II. After more than a decade of rapid, bewildering change, and exhausting battles against the Great Depression and the Axis, the vast majority wanted surcease. Most Americans yearned for stability. They desired harmony. Few had any tolerance for revolutionary proposals, in civil rights or anything else. Fewer looked kindly on any policies likely to promote domestic conflict.

White supremacists, moreover, played on the obsessive American fear of Communism to discredit the civil-rights cause. They claimed repeatedly that agitation against Jim Crow sowed dissension among the American people, the primary Communist objective in the emerging Cold War. The leading spokesmen of the South constantly pointed to Communist support of the civil-rights movement. Segregationists missed no opportunity to link the black struggle with Communist ideology and subversion. In the heyday of red-baiting after World War II, these tactics worked. Most civil-rights groups avoided direct action. Their leadership opted for a conservative posture to avoid even a hint of radicalism. When a small interracial band of pacifists and socialists from the Congress of Racial Equality and the Fellowship of Reconciliation journeyed throughout the upper South to test compliance of a Supreme Court ruling against segregation in interstate travel, the Negro press barely reported the news, and other civil-rights organizations shunned the 1947 Journey of

Reconciliation. The following year they opposed A. Philip Randolph's call for civil disobedience to protest Jim Crow in the armed forces. With undue haste, the civil-rights leadership condemned the pro-Soviet remarks of Paul Robeson, a controversial black singer and actor, and disassociated themselves from the Marxist stance of W. E. B. Du Bois. The fear of McCarthyism so inhibited blacks that they failed to use the Korean War as a lever for racial reform, as they had World War II. At mid-century, direct action had ceased being a tactic in the quest for racial justice.

That suited the NAACP hierarchy. Never entirely at ease with the black mass actions during the New Deal and early war years, the NAACP became less a protest organization and more an agency of litigation and lobbying after World War II. No longer fearing that competition from more combative black groups would overshadow the NAACP, its branches in the South concentrated on voter registration, while those in the North endeavored to secure fair-employment and fair-housing ordinances. By 1953, twelve states and thirty cities had adopted fair-employment laws of varying effectiveness. Median black-family income rose from \$1,614 to \$2,338 between 1947 and 1952. As a percentage of median white-family income, black earnings jumped from 41 percent in 1940 to 51 percent in 1949, and to 57 percent in 1952. That year, nearly 40 percent of blacks were engaged in professional, white-collar, skilled, and semi-skilled work, double the proportion of 1940. The life expectancy of blacks increased from 53.1 years in 1940 to 61.7 years in 1953, compared to 64.2 and 69.6 for whites, and the proportion of black families owning their homes went from 25 percent to 30 percent in the forties. Meanwhile, the proportion of blacks aged five to nineteen enrolled in school leaped from 60 percent in 1930 to 68.4 percent in 1940, to 74.8 percent in 1950. That figure still lagged behind the 79.3 percent of whites in school, but the gap had narrowed dramatically. And the

number of blacks in college had soared from about 27,000 in 1930 to over 113,000 in 1950.

Such gains apparently justified the NAACP's approach and secured its hegemony in race relations. The national office and legal staff at midcentury marshaled all their resources for a courtroom assault on *de jure* school segregation. Many blacks believed integrated education to be the main route to racial equality. No other Afro-American protest group even put forth an alternative strategy of social change. By 1954, all the hopes of blacks rested on the success of the NAACP litigation. It had become an article of faith that a Supreme Court decision ruling school segregation unconstitutional would cause the quick death of Jim Crow in America.

The first major crack in the edifice of school segregation had come in 1938, when the NAACP won a Supreme Court ruling which held that an out-of-state scholarship to a black Missourian wishing to study law at the University of Missouri denied that student the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the constitution. The Court declared that Missouri could not exclude blacks from its law school when it offered Afro-Americans only out-of-state tuition grants as an alternative. Hoping to make segregation so prohibitively expensive that the South would dismantle its biracial system because of the financial burden, the NAACP launched a series of suits seeking complete equality in facilities governed by the separate-but-equal rule. Then, emboldened by the strides made by blacks during the Second World War, the NAACP's Legal Defense and Education Fund, led by Thurgood Marshall, shifted from skirmishes on the inequality of separate facilities to a direct attack on segregation itself. Marshall hoped his strategy would force the Court to overrule *Plessy*, the 1896 opinion that declared segregation no infringement on civil rights if the states provided blacks with separate accommodations equal to those given to whites. Marshall's work resulted first in three unanimous decisions on a

single day in 1950 which demolished the separate-but-equal facade. The high court struck down Jim Crow on railway dining cars in the South; it ruled that if a state chose not to establish an equal and separate school for blacks, then it could not segregate blacks within the white school; and, lastly, the tribunal so emphasized the importance of "intangible factors" in determining the equality of separate schools that separate-but-equal no longer seemed possible. Although the Supreme Court held that it was not necessary to reexamine *Plessy* to grant relief to the three black plaintiffs, the 1950 decisions made the end of segregated schooling for students at all levels a near-certainty.

In 1951, Marshall began to coordinate a series of lawsuits charging segregated education with being discriminatory per se, even if the facilities were equal. In Clarendon County, South Carolina, the NAACP sued in the name of several black schoolchildren, and in Prince Edward County, Virginia, they represented black high-school students. In New Castle County, Delaware, and in the District of Columbia, Marshall filed suits on behalf of both elementary and high-school black students. And in Topeka, Kansas, the NAACP argued the case of Oliver Brown, who sought to enjoin enforcement of a state law that permitted cities to maintain segregated schools, which forced his eight-year-old daughter, Linda, to travel a mile by bus to reach a black school even though she lived only three blocks from an all-white elementary school. On December 9, 1952, the Supreme Court heard oral argument on all five cases, combined and docketed under the name of the petitioner listed first—Oliver Brown. Unexpectedly, the NAACP was aided by the Truman administration, which, in its last days, filed a brief as a friend of the Court arguing against the constitutionality of segregation.

The Supreme Court initially divided on the question of overturning *Plessy*. After several months of discussion, two justices changed their mind, creating a slim majority in favor of the NAACP's contention. Now the question became whether the justices in the minority could be likewise persuaded. To that

end, the Court voted for a reargument. It asked the litigants to prepare answers to questions pertaining to the intentions of the framers of the Fourteenth Amendment, the power of the Court to abolish segregation in the schools, and, if the tribunal did have such a right and chose to exercise it, whether the Supreme Court could permit gradual desegregation or did it have to order an instant end to segregation. While the lawyers revised their briefs, Chief Justice Fred Vinson died suddenly in the summer of 1953. The new President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, appointed California Governor Earl Warren to fill the vacant post. Vinson had sought to avoid ruling on *Plessy*, and in all likelihood, two other justices would have voted with him, resulting in either a further postponement on the constitutionality of school segregation or a seriously split decision.

Following the reargument, which began on December 7 and lasted for three days, the nation waited for what most commentators predicted would be a historic decision. But for half a year the Court remained silent on this most celebrated case. Behind closed doors, the bickering and bargaining continued. A clear majority of the justices wanted to void segregation in the schools and to reverse *Plessy*. Two justices held out, and Warren kept postponing the decision, hoping he could gain their concurrence. Above all, the Chief Justice wanted the Court's ruling to be unanimous. Anything less on a social issue so sensitive, on a political question so explosive, would destroy the chance for full compliance by Southern whites. So, patiently, Warren beseeched and compromised. Finally, early in May, the two dissenters gave the Chief Justice their assent. He had won unanimity.

By Monday, May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court ruling on school segregation had been so overdue that many forgot its imminence. The morning's newspapers gave no hint that a decision would be announced. Most journalists in Washington speculated on the consequences of a French loss of Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam, on the outcome of the Army-McCarthy hear-

ings, and on the chances for more rain. Even those reporters seated in the ornate chamber of the Supreme Court did not anticipate that the segregation decision would be announced when the Court convened at noon.

After forty minutes of routine business, the Chief Justice leaned forward and began to read: "I have for announcement the judgment and opinion of the Court in No. 1—*Oliver Brown et al. v. Board of Education of Topeka*." Warren traced briefly the paths that led the cases to the Supreme Court and reviewed the history of the Fourteenth Amendment, finding it "inclusive" in relation to school segregation because public education, particularly in the South, had barely developed in the 1860s. "Today," the Chief Justice continued, "education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments." Since it is the key to opportunity and advancement in American life, public education "is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms." On this premise, he quickly came to the nub of the matter: "Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other 'tangible' factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities?"

Warren paused. "We believe that it does." Buttressed by a footnote citing several contemporary studies on the psychological effects of segregation, the former governor contended that the separation of black children "from others of similar age and qualifications solely because of their race generates a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone." He ended in a rising voice. "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection

of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment." Nothing in American race relations would be the same again.

Blacks shouted hosannas as they heard the news. They hailed Marshall, the black lawyer who had used the white man's laws before an all-white Supreme Court to win a verdict voiding segregation. Their jubilant leaders vied in choosing superlatives to laud the decision. Euphoric blacks declared that just as the first Emancipation Proclamation abolished slavery, so this second proclamation of emancipation would end all Jim Crow. *Brown* would be the precedent for declaring unconstitutional any state-imposed or enforced segregation. Surely, most rhapsodized, a new day in race relations had dawned. *Brown* promised a truly equal education for black children in integrated classrooms throughout the nation. More, it offered the real beginning of a multiracial democratic society. *Brown* heightened the aspirations and expectations of Afro-Americans as nothing ever had before. Nearly a century after their professed freedom had been stalled, compromised, and stolen, blacks confidently anticipated being free and equal at last.

Little in the next year shook this faith. Few Dixie politicians rushed to echo Mississippi Senator James O. Eastland that the South "will not abide by nor obey this legislative decision by a political court." Most educators foresaw scant difficulty in putting the court ruling into effect. According to a *New York Times* survey of school officials, none thought "that the threats to abandon the public school system would be carried out. . . . No one expected any violence or any real crisis to develop." Several hundred school districts in the border-states (Delaware, Kentucky, Maryland, Missouri, Oklahoma, and West Virginia) and in states with local option on segregation (Arizona, Kansas, New Mexico, and Wyoming) quickly and peacefully integrated their classrooms, as did the District of Columbia at President Eisenhower's direction.

Then, on May 31, 1955, the momentum stopped. Just fifty-four weeks after the Supreme Court had taken a giant stride to-

ward the demise of Jim Crow, it stepped backward. Its implementation decision on the *Brown* ruling rejected the NAACP's plea to order instant and total school desegregation. The justices, instead, adopted the "go slow" approach advocated by the Justice Department and by the attorneys general of the Southern states. The Court assigned the responsibility for drawing up plans for desegregation to local school authorities and left it to local federal judges to determine the pace of desegregation, requiring only that a "prompt and reasonable start toward full compliance" be made and that desegregation proceed "with all deliberate speed." Acknowledging the potential for difficulties, moreover, the Supreme Court refused to set a deadline and authorized delays when necessary. For the first time, the Supreme Court had vindicated a constitutional right and then deferred its exercise.

However much the Warren Court foresaw the seemingly endless round of further litigation, procrastination, and obstruction this invited, circumstances dictated the decision for gradualism. It was the price of unanimity in *Brown v. Board of Education*, the compromise needed to keep two justices from dissenting. Warren deeply believed that a divided Court on so sensitive an issue "would have been catastrophic," that only a unanimous desegregation decision stood a chance of public support.

He accepted gradualism to allay the fears of those justices who worried that the Court's inability to enforce a momentous ruling would discredit the entire judicial process. The compromise also reflected the unpopularity of *Brown* in the South. Public-opinion polls showed more than 80 percent of white Southerners opposed to school desegregation, and the Supreme Court hoped to head off resistance to the law of the land by permitting the change to be slow and piecemeal. To order immediate school desegregation, the Court reckoned, would force most Southern politicians to take up the cudgels of defiance to federal authority, an action only a tiny minority had taken to date. Desperately, the Justices sought to contain the rebellion,

since they could not even count on the other branches of the federal government.

No help would come from the White House. The President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, declined to join the battle against segregation. He refused to endorse or support the *Brown* ruling. Covetous of the votes of white Southerners and wedded to a restrictive view of Presidential authority, Eisenhower repeatedly stated that he would express neither "approval nor disapproval" of *Brown v. Board of Education*. He lumped together those who demanded compliance with the Court decision and those who obstructed it, publicly denouncing "extremists on both sides." Expressive of his conservatism, the President remarked often: "I don't believe you can change the hearts of men with laws or decisions." To one of his aides, Eisenhower emphasized: "I am convinced that the Supreme Court decision set back progress in the South at least fifteen years. . . . It's all very well to talk about school integration—if you remember you may also be talking about social disintegration. Feelings are deep on this. . . . And the fellow who tries to tell me that you can do these things by force is just plain nuts."

Eisenhower preferred change as a result of education, rather than coercion. But he would not educate. The President rejected all pleas that he tour the South seeking compliance, or call a conference of Southern moderates, or appeal on television to the nation for understanding. He simply did not favor school desegregation, much as he had never approved desegregation of the armed forces. Eisenhower regretted he had ever appointed Earl Warren to the Supreme Court, calling it "the biggest damfool mistake I ever made." And the titular head of the Democratic Party, Adlai Stevenson, barely differed on this issue from his GOP rival. Stevenson asked that the white South be "given time and patience," rejected the idea of using federal troops to enforce court-ordered desegregation, and opposed all proposals that would bar federal aid to schools maintaining segregation.

To be sure, no danger existed in the mid-fifties that Congress

would legislate to speed desegregation. A conservative coalition of Midwestern Republicans and Southern Democrats controlled both the House of Representatives and the Senate, guarding vigilantly against any federal infringement on states' rights. Not content merely to stonewall any move to support *Brown*, Southern congressmen mobilized in 1956 to fight against what Senator Richard Russell of Georgia termed "a flagrant abuse of judicial power" and what Virginia Senator Harry Byrd called "the most serious blow that has been struck against the rights of the states." On March 12, 1956, 101 members of Congress from the South signed a "Declaration of Constitutional Principles" asking their states to refuse to obey the desegregation order. Labeling *Brown* "unwarranted" and "contrary to the Constitution," the Southern manifesto proclaimed that the Supreme Court possessed no power to demand an end to segregation, that only a state, and not the federal government, can decide whether a school should be segregated or not, and that the states would be in the right in opposing the Court's order. The signatories further promised to try to reverse *Brown*, and to prevent the government from using force if it tried to carry out the Supreme Court decision.

The manifesto, along with Eisenhower's silence and the Supreme Court's paradoxical "deliberate speed" ruling, ushered in an era of massive resistance to the law of the land in the eleven states of the Old Confederacy. Defiance of the Court and the Constitution became the touchstone of Southern loyalty, the necessary proof of one's concern for the security of the white race. With the overwhelming support of the South's white press and pulpit, segregationist politicians resurrected John C. Calhoun's notions of "interposition" and "nullification" to rationalize their effort to thwart federal authority. Together they galvanized racist hatred to gain backing for every conceivable diehard tactic of opposition to *Brown*.

White supremacists first resorted to stalling, doing nothing until confronted with a federal-court injunction. This forced

black parents and NAACP attorneys to initiate individual desegregation suits in the more than two thousand Southern school districts. Usually, the black plaintiffs faced economic intimidation by the local white-power structure; often they risked physical harm; always, they encountered repeated postponements due to crowded court dockets and motions for delay by school authorities. After years of harassment to the plaintiffs, mounting legal costs to the NAACP, lost jobs and incalculable psychological damage to blacks due to threats and fear, school authorities would finally come up with a plan for the most limited, token desegregation.

Then black schoolchildren had to face the horrors of racist resistance. In one school district after another, segregationists staged the same drama: forcing young blacks to enter a school by passing rock-throwing white mobs and white pickets shouting "Nigger! Nigger! Nigger!"; persuading white teachers to ignore or persecute the black students; encouraging the children to torment and threaten their new black classmates. "If you come back to school, I'll cut your guts out!" could be heard in the halls," recalled a Tennessee high-school teacher. "Eggs smashed on their books, ink smeared on their clothes, in the lockers, knives flourished in their presence, nails tossed in their faces and spiked in their seats. Vulgar words constantly whispered in their ears." The harassment proved too much for some blacks. They reenrolled their children in segregated schools; they moved to other towns and states. But more and more blacks endured the hatred and persisted in their struggle for dignity and equality.

To frustrate such black courage, segregationists pressed for new laws to obstruct integration. "As long as we can legislate, we can segregate," said one white supremacist, and the Southern states rushed pell-mell to enact more than 450 laws and resolutions to prevent or limit school desegregation. Some acts required schools faced with desegregation orders to cease operation; others revoked the license of any teacher who taught mixed

classes; still more amended compulsory-attendance laws, so that no child could be required to enroll in an integrated school, and provided for state payments of private-academy tuition, so that districts could abolish their public-school system rather than desegregate.

Of all the legislative tactics of massive resistance, none proved more successful than the pupil-placement law. Theoretically, it guaranteed each child "freedom of choice" in the selection of a school. Local authorities could not consider race in assigning pupils to particular schools. But they could accept or reject transfer applications on such criteria as, in the Georgia law, "the psychological qualification of the pupil," "the psychological effect upon the pupil of attendance at a particular school," and "the morals, conduct, health and personal standards of the pupil." Invariably, school boards assigned black and white children to different schools. In 1958, moreover, the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the pupil-placement laws, which were nondiscriminatory at face value but which actually maintained school systems as rigidly segregated as those which the justices had struck down four years earlier.

To frustrate blacks further, most of the Southern states also passed measures to hound and harass the NAACP, which had almost singlehandedly carried the campaign for school desegregation. Various laws required the NAACP to make public its membership lists, made membership a cause for dismissal of public-school teachers and state employees, charged the association with committing "barratry" (the persistent instigation of lawsuits), and made it a crime for organizations to cause trouble by attacking local segregation ordinances. In time, the Supreme Court struck down all the anti-NAACP laws, but for several years the association was forced to divert energy, money, and talent away from the desegregation battle to the fight for its own survival.

Not content with legal measures of obstruction, hostile segregationists preached violent resistance. Virulent rabble-rousers,

often with the approval of the South's most respected spokesmen, stirred up the region's rural and low-income whites to attack blacks insisting on their constitutional rights. The Ku Klux Klan revived. Zealots across the South organized new klaverns, donned their white hoods and robes, and burned crosses to terrorize blacks. Too respectable to join the low-status KKK, tens of thousands of middle-class whites rushed to enroll in the White Citizens' Councils. They wore no masks but proved just as determined as the Klan to defy *Brown* and enforce racial orthodoxy, by intimidation if possible and by insurrection if necessary. Together, the KKK, the Councils, and a host of local vigilante committees brought riots and violent demonstrations to the South at the start of the school year each September.

Their lawless behavior, often directed at young children, outraged millions of Americans who did not live in the South. Most Northerners cared little about school desegregation in Dixie and considered the NAACP too militant. Nevertheless, they were shocked at the news headlines of schools being dynamite-bombed and the televised scenes of hate-filled white mobs rampaging to preserve segregation. Time and again in the decade ahead, such racist extremism would discredit the cause of the white South and force a majority of otherwise unconcerned citizens to demand that the federal government act to preserve order and enforce the law of the land. It happened first in Little Rock.

A New South city, Little Rock appeared an unlikely battleground in the fight over school desegregation. It had a racially moderate mayor, congressman, and newspaper, and a governor not known to be a race-baiter. Several other Arkansas communities had peacefully begun to desegregate, as had the state university, and, after a bit of stalling, Little Rock's school board acceded to a federal court order to admit nine blacks to Central High, a school with some two thousand white students, as the first step toward integration. A model of gradualism and def-

erence to the whites of Little Rock, the desegregation process would take eight years to complete. Indeed, the only vocal opposition to it came from the local NAACP, which denounced the process as too token and too slow.

In 1957, however, the winds of resistance howled. A storm of racial demagoguery swept the South. Politicians seeking office shouted defiance of the Supreme Court and vied in pledging unyielding opposition to *Brown*. Some vowed they would go to jail rather than desegregate; some swore they would die rather than permit integration. Those who counseled moderation customarily came in second and, like George C. Wallace in Alabama, promised: "They outniggered me that time, but they'll never do it again." In Arkansas, Governor Orval Faubus believed he faced a difficult fight for reelection. No gubernatorial incumbent had won a third term in half a century. But he found the answer to his ambitions in the political climate. He would campaign as the preeminent defender of white supremacy. He would "out-nigger" his racist opponents. He would obstruct the federal court order in Little Rock.

On September 2, the evening before Arkansas schools were to reopen, Faubus unexpectedly went on television to announce that it would "not be possible to restore or to maintain order if forcible integration is carried out tomorrow," despite the fact that no Little Rock officials then anticipated trouble. He ordered a National Guard contingent to defend Central High School. Ostensibly, their mission was to prevent violence. But when the nine black students sought to enter the school on September 3, the guardsmen barred their way. "Governor Faubus has placed this school off limits to Negroes," announced a National Guard spokesman, forcing the black children to retreat. Now knowing that the state troops had been instructed to prevent desegregation, the nine blacks stayed home the next day, waiting for another court order. It came immediately. The federal district court in Arkansas again insisted that desegregation begin and ordered the governor to show cause why he should not be en-

joined from interfering with the school board's plan. When the black students prepared to enter Central High the following day, a milling crowd of angry whites shouted: "Niggers. Niggers. They're coming. Here they come!" The guardsmen once again turned back the blacks seeking to enroll in Central High School. The authority of the federal government and of a state had directly clashed. National attention now focused on President Eisenhower, who was constitutionally required to enforce the law of the land.

Eisenhower had no desire to do so. He had never offered leadership on racial matters. He considered *Brown* a mistake. His belief in the limits of federal power and his fondness for states' rights combined to make the President highly reluctant to intervene in Little Rock. "You cannot change people's hearts merely by laws," he told a press conference that week, adding a grave remark about the white South's concern for the "mongrelization of the race." The general believed Dixie ripe for Republicanism. He had won four Southern states in 1952, and five in 1956. Looking ahead to 1960, Eisenhower was determined to avoid any action that would reestablish the Democratic grip on the mass of white Southern voters. Purposefully, he would do nothing to rally public opinion behind desegregation. Yet he could not ignore Faubus's defiance of a federal court. To give the appearance of action without really acting, Eisenhower met with the governor on September 14. Both politicians talked truce and temporized.

On September 20, the federal district court repeated its order to the governor to stop interfering with school desegregation in Little Rock. Predicting bloodshed, Faubus withdrew the National Guard from Central High and left the state. However, several of the governor's henchmen, adept at mobilizing mob violence, remained in Little Rock. By early Monday morning, September 23, over a thousand shrieking white protesters surrounded the high school. Racists from across the South had flocked to the city to prevent the blacks from entering the school.

While white students sang "Two, four, six, eight, we ain't gonna integrate," the growing mob chanted "Niggers, keep away from our school. Go back to the jungle." Over and over the crowd reassured itself: "The niggers won't get in." Suddenly someone roared: "They've gone in!" "Oh, my God!" a woman cried. "The niggers are inside!" "They're in!" others screamed. "They're in!" "The niggers are in our school." Barely constrained by the local police, hysterical whites surged toward the school. Some began a new chant: "Come on out! Come on out!" Groups of white students exited from Central High to shouts of approval, stimulating louder importuning, and more white students left the school. The mayor, fearful of violence, ordered the nine blacks withdrawn.

That evening President Eisenhower appeared on television to denounce the "disgraceful occurrence" at Little Rock. Aware that Southern extremism had become worldwide news, he issued a proclamation directing those who had obstructed federal law "to cease and desist." But an even larger mob milled about Central High the next morning and school board officials dreaded inflaming the howling protesters by forcing the entry of the nine blacks. Eisenhower responded by federalizing the Arkansas National Guard and dispatching a thousand troops of the 101st Airborne Division to Little Rock. The next morning, with fixed bayonets, the paratroopers dispersed the crowd and led the black students into Central High School. Armed troops remained in the school for two months, escorting the nine blacks to their classes. Then the President replaced the paratroopers with federalized Arkansas guardsmen, who continued to patrol Central High for the rest of the year.

Southern extremism had forced Eisenhower's hand. Not to have acted, he ruefully told a Southern senator, would have been "tantamount to acquiescence in anarchy and the dissolution of the union." As a last resort he dispatched federal troops to uphold national supremacy, defend Presidential authority,

and enforce the law of the land. In so doing, Eisenhower became the first President since Reconstruction to use armed troops in support of Negro rights. However unwittingly, the President's actions raised the expectations of blacks that the federal government would finally protect their civil rights, and dashed the hopes of segregationists that court orders could be obstructed through violence.

Also in 1957, Congress enacted civil-rights legislation for the first time since Reconstruction. This further bolstered black aspirations and eroded the confidence of white supremacists that they could indefinitely thwart all measures to aid the struggle for black equality. More a symbolic milestone than an act to end black disenfranchisement, Republican and Democratic strategists fashioned a voting-rights bill designed to secure their own political aims rather than to increase black registration. Nevertheless, after eighty-two years of inaction, caused by apathy, opposition to Negro rights, and unwillingness to overcome Southern resistance, both houses of Congress formally declared illegal the disenfranchisement of Afro-Americans.

Attorney General Herbert Brownell began early in 1956 to press President Eisenhower to propose a civil-rights bill. Whether or not Congress passed it, Brownell argued, such a proposal would highlight the North-South split in the Democratic Party and bolster the image of the party of Lincoln with Northern black voters. A former chairman of the Republican National Committee, Brownell attributed Thomas Dewey's defeat in 1948 to the candidate's poor showing in black districts. The Attorney General knew that, in 1956, blacks constituted about 5 percent of the voters in fourteen states which held 261 electoral votes; he calculated that they held a balance of power in seven states that cast 197 electoral ballots, as well as in some sixty congressional districts. Brownell also sensed the widespread dissatisfaction with the Democrats among blacks, who blamed the party of Byrd and Eastland for the massive re-

sistance to desegregation. The opportunity now existed, he pleaded with the President, to end the black allegiance to the Democrats that had been firm since 1936.

Eisenhower demurred. He feared stirring the wrath of the white South. The President remonstrated that any civil-rights action by Congress would worsen an already tense racial situation and would retard progress much as had the desegregation decision by the Supreme Court. "I personally believe if you try to go too far too fast in laws in this delicate field that has involved the emotions of so many millions of Americans," he said at a press conference, "you are making a mistake." Eisenhower had his eyes on the votes of Southern whites resistant to change. He wanted to make the Republican Party of limited government the new home of conservative Southern states' righters and decided not to support any civil-rights legislation before the 1956 election. Democratic congressional leaders sighed with relief. The last thing they wanted on the eve of a Presidential contest was a divisive intra-party squabble on civil rights. Only studied silence on race could keep them from alienating either Northern blacks or Southern whites, two of the major components of the fragile coalition known as the national Democratic Party.

Immediately after the election, however, Eisenhower requested suffrage legislation and the Senate majority leader, Democrat Lyndon Johnson of Texas, agreed to work for its passage. Unwilling to accept continued Democratic stalling on civil rights, Harlem's congressman, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., had bolted to Ike in 1956 and brought tens of thousands of black votes into the GOP column. The President had a substantially increased proportion of the black vote over 1952, winning black majorities in at least a score of cities. This caused many Republicans looking ahead to an even better record in black communities in 1960, especially Vice-President Richard Nixon, to press Eisenhower to support civil rights. At the same time, the popularity of Republicanism among Afro-Americans in 1956 frightened Northern Democrats. They were determined to win

back the black votes the GOP had just gained; they believed that enacting civil-rights legislation was the only sure way to do it. Democratic liberals would no longer sacrifice their own political needs in deference to those of their Southern brethren. Johnson, meanwhile, sought both to hold the Democratic Party together and to foster his own Presidential aspirations. He thought he could do so by fashioning a moderate civil-rights act, one not odious enough to alienate his Southern backing yet significant enough to enable him to shed his reputation as a provincial Southern white supremacist.

The politics of expediency, not surprisingly, produced a compromise bill. The forces fighting for and against civil rights each gained a little and gave up a bit, as did Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, Northerners and Southerners. Steering a middle course between reform and reaction, Eisenhower and Johnson won enactment of a mild bill palatable to most. The 1957 civil-rights act authorized the Justice Department to seek injunctions against interference with the right to vote and established a Commission on Civil Rights empowered to investigate, appraise, and report. The law ignored the issue of segregation and barely reduced the resistance to black voting by Southern election officials or the intimidation tactics of vigilante groups opposed to black enfranchisement. Still, in the spirit of the times, most Afro-American spokesmen argued that a half loaf is better than no bread at all. Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, changing the metaphor, summed up the general attitude of the black leadership: "If you are digging a ditch with a teaspoon, and a man comes along and offers you a spade, there is something wrong with your head if you don't take it because he didn't offer you a bulldozer."

After three years of registration drives which added fewer than two hundred thousand blacks to the voting lists, an increase of just 3 percent, the NAACP again demanded suffrage legislation, and the dynamics of election-year politics again resulted in an emasculated civil-rights act. The 1960 palliative

1960
 authorized the courts to appoint federal referees to safeguard voting rights and made it a federal offense to obstruct court orders by violent means. Too weak to have any real impact on Southern voting, the measure still signified the growing strength of the civil-rights alliance and the diminished power of the white South to thwart Congress from joining the executive and judicial branches in their first steps toward a "second Reconstruction."

All these initial, halting, partial moves by the federal government to assist the cause of black equality resulted in intensifying the struggle. They produced among blacks both soaring expectations that Jim Crow could soon be eliminated from American life and a growing rage toward all temporizing. Cumulatively they generated a determination that segregation and discrimination, however wrong and unconstitutional, would cease only when blacks themselves acted massively and militantly enough to guarantee that end.

By enacting civil-rights legislation for the first time since 1875, Congress did much to legitimate black aspirations for first-class citizenship. The termination of a Southern filibuster after 125 hours in 1960 encouraged blacks to believe that racial justice could be attained within the constitutional framework. The two voting-rights acts inspired Afro-Americans to attempt to register and to insist on other rights. But the patent weakness of the measures convinced them that they still did not have effective political power and that their white allies could not be depended on. Legislation, moreover, needed to be implemented to produce real change, and neither the Justice Department nor the federal judges in the South evinced much enthusiasm to utilize the two laws to promote the prospects for black voting. In the 1960 elections, less than one in four eligible blacks could vote in the South. Disappointed, Afro-Americans also questioned the legislative tactics of the NAACP, which placed a premium on neither provoking the black masses nor embittering the white majority, and the preference of Roy Wilkins for a

quiet, diplomatic campaign rather than "the kind that picks a fight with the sheriff and gets somebody's head beaten."

The crisis at Little Rock similarly engendered black faith and frustration. However belated, Eisenhower's decisive use of federal force to protect black rights inspired trust in the government and confidence that Southern extremism would not be tolerated. Bolstering such assurance, some 90 percent of the whites outside the South questioned in a Gallup poll stated that Eisenhower had been right in sending troops to Little Rock. Still further buoying blacks, the Supreme Court convened a special session in 1958 to deal with Little Rock and ruled that the threat of white violence could not justify a refusal to desegregate. "The constitutional rights of respondents," the Court declared, "are not to be sacrificed or yielded to violence and disorder. . . . Law and order are not here to be preserved by depriving the Negro children of their constitutional rights." But the Supreme Court could not transform its lofty aims into reality; most Northern whites lost interest after the crisis subsided, and President Eisenhower refused ever again to enforce the school-desegregation decision. In addition, the whites of Little Rock replaced moderate Congressman Brooks Hays with a militant segregationist and opted to close down all the public high schools rather than accept token integration. It would take two years and another federal-court edict to reopen them, and by 1964 still only 123 black children out of a total Afro-American registration of nearly seven thousand students would be attending desegregated schools in Little Rock, Arkansas whites, meanwhile, swept Faubus back into the statehouse by a landslide events, the leader of the desegregation struggle in Little Rock expressed the new mood of bitter determination seeping throughout black America: "We've got to decide whether it's going to be this generation or never."

More than anything else, however, *Brown v. Board of Educa-*

tion and its aftermath stimulated black hope and anguish. For much of the first half of the twentieth century, blacks had accepted the leadership of the NAACP in their struggle for equality and had followed the association in relying upon litigation and legislative lobbying to eradicate racism. When their patient support began to be rewarded, each small victory led to the desire for more and bigger triumphs, each advance into the mainstream of American life quickened their anticipation for greater progress. By 1954, many Afro-Americans believed that the overturning of *Plessy* in the school cases would rapidly undermine the whole Jim Crow system.

But it did not happen. "Colored" and "White" signs remained over drinking fountains and rest rooms from one end of the South to the other. Southern blacks could not sit down next to a white and be served a hamburger or a cup of coffee. Drivers continued to demand that blacks stay in the back of the bus. Worse, black children kept attending schools that were usually squalid and almost always segregated. In 1960, only one-sixth of one percent of the black students in the South went to a desegregated school. By 1964, just two percent of the black children in the South attended integrated schools, and none at all in the two Southern counties involved in the *Brown* decision.

Disenchantment thus tempered the euphoria with which blacks greeted the Supreme Court's ruling on May 17, 1954. *Brown v. Board of Education*, Eisenhower's employment of federal troops to curtail racist extremism, and the passage of two civil-rights bills undoubtedly prepared the way for a more massive and militant phase of the black struggle. They gave legitimacy to the quest for equality. Each raised the aspirations of blacks and inspired blacks to insist on the full rights of citizenship. The repeated heroism of the black men, women, and children engaged in the school-desegregation battle, moreover, broke the shackles from many chained black minds. Yet disenfranchisement and segregation remained the rule in the South. The White Citizens' Councils continued to flourish and domi-

nate state governments. In the North, suburbanization encouraged the growth of a racially segmented society. Automation and recessions would lead to a tripling of black unemployment in the 1950s. Blacks no longer counted on automatic progress. Their reliance on legalism, on the NAACP, and on white politicians diminished. Anger and hope gave rise to a new sense of urgency. Bitterness mixed with confidence stimulated a yearning to widen the scope of the struggle. And an amalgam of impatience, indignation, and buoyancy readied the black struggle for new protest leaders and strategies.

~~to not beginning a series of jailings and beatings which did nothing to diminish the legendary leadership of the head of SCLC~~

The prominence of CORE and SNCC, and especially King, in the anti-war movement further eroded the legitimacy of the black struggle in the eyes of most whites. At a time when an overwhelming majority of Americans considered opposition to the government's Vietnam policy to be disloyal, King demanded in 1965: "The long night of war must be stopped." His call for a negotiated Indochina settlement infuriated President Johnson and lost SCLC the support of influential and wealthy white liberals. Moderates in the movement stipulated to King that civil rights remain divorced from foreign policy, and the minister backed down, assured by the White House of the war's imminent end. But the promised peace did not come.

Early in 1966, Johnson admitted: "Because of Vietnam, we cannot do all that we should, or all that we would like to do." Drastic cuts in the domestic budget followed. The war against poverty and the government's efforts to achieve racial equality ground to a halt. CORE angrily insisted that the United States withdraw its forces from Indochina. Declaring its sympathy with "the men in this country who are unwilling to respond to a military draft," SNCC officially resolved: "Vietnamese are being murdered because the United States is pursuing an aggressive policy in violation of international law." Six SNCC staffers in Atlanta then invaded an induction center, provoking parallel anti-war maneuvers by militant, educated young blacks throughout the country, who chanted: "Hell, no! We won't go!" A hero of black youth, Muhammad Ali, capsulated their alienation in his adamant refusal to serve in a "white man's war." Nikki Giovanni delineated their anger in her poetry: "We kill in Vietnam/for them/We kill for UN & NATO & SEATO & US/And everywhere for all alphabet but BLACK."

King broke his silence. He knew it would be neither popular nor politic. But to say nothing about the heinous killing and

destruction in Vietnam made a mockery of his life's work to teach love and nonviolence. King also believed his leadership could channel constructively the inchoate anti-war protests of young militants. The SCLC head deemed the war and racial injustice "inextricably bound together." Blacks could no longer concern themselves with just civil rights. "It is very nice to drink milk at an unsegregated lunch counter—but not when there is strontium 90 in it." As King sought to forge an interracial alliance of the poor and oppressed, moreover, he increasingly considered the unjust, immoral war ten thousand miles away to be robbing the nation of the resources necessary to create new jobs and to eradicate the slums. "The bombs in Vietnam explode at home," the black minister preached. "They destroy the hopes and possibilities of a decent America." Despite great pressure from the White House, King kept reiterating that the United States spent \$500,000 to kill each enemy soldier but only \$35 a year to assist each American in poverty. "The promises of the Great Society," he intoned, "have been shot down on the battlefield of Vietnam."

Disregarding the consequences, King made opposition to the war his top priority in 1967. While his lieutenants conspicuously organized anti-war demonstrations, King assumed the leadership of the unprecedented Spring Mobilization Against the War, completely burning his bridges to the Administration, to the Congress, and to most of his erstwhile allies. Rustin, Wilkins, and Young loudly disagreed with his denunciation of the United States as "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today." Senator Edward Brooke, Ralph Bunche, and Jackie Robinson openly lambasted King for urging Americans to become conscientious objectors. The media repeatedly described King's criticism of the war as destructive to his people and his cause, and Lyndon Johnson did all he could covertly to destroy the minister's influence. Deserted by the liberals for going too far in his remonstrance, derided by the more vitriolic radicals for not going far enough, King lost power and status. The intensif-

cation of black violence and white backlash in 1967 underlined his ineffectuality. King sank into despondency.

Looking to 1968 to recoup, King began planning a Poor People's March on Washington. To bestir the nation's apathy toward economic injustice, he envisaged an interracial coalition of the dispossessed descending on Washington in far greater numbers, and engaging in far more disruptive tactics, than in any of his previous demonstrations against racial injustice. "Timid supplication for justice will not solve the problem," King announced. "We have got to confront the power structure massively. We can't live with another summer like the last. This is a desperate plea. I want to give the nation the opportunity to respond."

In March 1968, King interrupted his efforts to organize the Poor People's Campaign to go to Memphis to rally support for the mostly black sanitation workers of the city striking for union recognition and a living wage. The protest march he attempted to lead quickly degenerated into violence as a black youth gang went on a looting and burning rampage and the police responded with tear gas and bullets. Shaken, King vowed to stay in Memphis to prove it was still possible "to hold a nonviolent march."

On April 3, King addressed his last church rally. He rambled softly about the progress that had been made since 1955, and of the gains yet to be made. Quietly he told of recent threats on his life. "But it doesn't matter with me now. Because I've been to the mountaintop." He turned to face his aides on the platform behind him. "I don't mind. Like anybody, I would like to live a long life. Longevity has its place. But I'm not concerned about that now." His voice began to rise. "I just want to do God's will. And He's allowed me to go up to the mountain!" He faced the hushed audience. Some wept openly. "And I've looked over and I've seen the promised land!" King shouted emotionally: "I may not get there with you, but I want you to know tonight"—he paused—"that we as a people will get to the promised

land." "King, King, King, King," the crowd chanted jubilantly, as the minister looked at length at his brother A.D. standing near the podium. "And I am happy tonight!" King roared. "I'm not worried about anything! I'm not fearing any man! Mine eyes have seen the glory . . . of the coming of the Lord!"

The next evening, while the thirty-nine-year-old minister conversed with his friends on the balcony at the Lorraine Motel, a rifle shot rang out and Martin Luther King, Jr., fell, murdered by a white assassin.

Within hours after the announcement of King's death, black uprisings flared in the ghettos of nearly a hundred and thirty cities. Twenty blocks of the Chicago West Side went up in flames before Mayor Richard Daley ordered his police to "shoot to kill." In Washington, D.C., over seven hundred fires set by arsonists lit up the night as army units in full combat gear took battle positions around the Capitol and on the grounds of the White House. By the end of the week, twenty-one thousand federal troops and thirty-four thousand National Guardsmen had been called out to quell the upheavals in over a hundred cities that had left forty-six dead, more than three thousand injured, some twenty-seven thousand arrested, and \$45 million of property lost.

The hopes of the movement died with King. More than any individual, Martin Luther King, Jr., epitomized the quest for racial brotherhood and equality by nonviolent means. Simultaneously he had been able to inspire blacks to struggle against racism and to encourage whites to acknowledge their responsibility for the plight of blacks without turning them against the movement. His death meant the abandonment of the middle ground that had been rapidly disintegrating since the passage of the voting-rights act in 1965. No other black leader would succeed in convincing large numbers of both races to share his dreams; no other would galvanize the movement to heroic exertions. In countless ways, individual blacks would continue to battle for a better existence, but the grand passion of the

organized struggle was moribund. Ralph Abernathy's effort to continue the Poor People's March on Washington proved a fiasco. The nation barely noticed the passing mule train, or the erected shantytown called Resurrection City, which rapidly sank in the mire of its own disunity and criminality. The arrest of the SCLC leaders and the brutal dispersement of the poor encamped in Washington aroused no significant howls of protest.

King's crusade already appeared to be a relic of a bygone era. White backlash ruled the roost. The fiery riots had rationalized expressions of hostility toward blacks. The prominence of movement leaders in anti-war activities, associated by many with the counterculture and student rebellions, had reinforced old prejudices and justified new antagonisms. The anti-white connotations of Black Power had cooled the ardor of white liberals for the struggle. And the movement's work in the North had fired the anxiety of the white working class that racial equality would come at the expense of the safety of its neighborhoods and schools, the security of its jobs and homes. Northern politicians adapted to the white urge to end racial reform with alacrity. In California, Ronald Reagan came to power in 1966 on the strength of his tough stance toward the rioters of Watts. In Boston, the adamant refusal of Louise Day Hicks to correct racial imbalance in the schools made her the most potent new political force in that city in 1967. "Law and order" and "Get tough with blacks" candidates triumphed in almost every city that had experienced a riot, and even in some that had not suffered racial turmoil.

For the first time in a decade, Congress rejected a proposed civil-rights bill in 1966. The House of Representatives in 1967 refused to seat Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., for illegal payroll practices that whites-in-Congress went unpunished for, and defeated a minor appropriation for the control of rats in the slums, laughingly deriding it as a "civil-rats bill." Following King's assassination in 1968, Congress did enact civil-rights legislation—a fair-housing bill seen by many

as an act of atonement for his murder. It sought to quiet the cries of angry blacks by outlawing racial discrimination in the sale and rental of housing. But the measure appeased, even pleased, the white majority by making incitement to riot a serious federal offense. Still other manifestations of the backlash included the landslide defeats of referenda for civilian boards to review police actions, the deluge of support for teachers' strikes against black community control of schools, and the emergence of huge white mobs jeering, "Nigger, nigger, nigger!" and stoning black protesters in the North.

The Presidential election of 1968 further substantiated the shift in momentum to the opponents of racial equality. Appealing to those weary of protest, Richard Nixon rode the backlash into the White House. He campaigned against open housing and busing for racial balance. He promised to slow federal efforts at school integration and to appoint only conservative justices to the federal courts. Nixon particularly solicited the support of traditional Democratic voters disgruntled with the excesses of the black struggle. Many responded to the appeal. The Democratic nominee, Hubert Humphrey, long associated in the public mind with the civil-rights movement, won just one out of every three white votes. The ethnic working class that deserted Humphrey largely rallied to the banner of George Wallace, whose American Independent Party made the fear and resentment of blacks the central thrust of its campaign. "On November 5," Wallace had predicted, "they're going to find out there are a lot of rednecks in this country." He was right. Despite all the difficulties of mounting an independent run for the Presidency, Wallace amassed 9.9 million votes, just under 14 percent of the turnout. The anti-black crusader polled almost as many votes in the North as he did in the South in this best showing of a third-party candidate since 1924.

Immediately after entering the White House, President Nixon began wooing the Wallace constituency to insure his reelection in 1972. He deliberately pursued a "Southern strategy," con-

ceding the votes of blacks and those committed to liberalism and going after those of white Southerners, suburbanites, and ethnic workers troubled by the specter of racial equality. Rather than follow the course counseled by his domestic advisor, the sociologist Daniel Patrick Moynihan, to behave with "benign neglect" on the race issue, the President intentionally focused public attention on the matter, and in a manner hardly benign to blacks.

The Nixon Administration took every opportunity to exploit the emotions of race. It urged Congress to impose a moratorium on court-ordered school busing, nominated conservative "strict constructionists" to the Supreme Court, and pleaded before the high tribunal for a postponement in the desegregation of Mississippi's schools. It lobbied in Congress to defeat the fair-housing enforcement program and the extension of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. While Vice-President Spiro Agnew played on the racial anxieties of Americans with his rhetoric, Nixon emulated the Offices for Civil Rights in the Justice and Health, Education and Welfare Departments. To outflank Wallace, the President vetoed bills and impounded funds designed to assist blacks, and he fired government officials who sought to implement integration guidelines. In dismay, the chairmen of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the United States Commission on Civil Rights resigned in protest, as did the head of the Small Business Administration's program for minorities. The president of the NAACP lamented: "For the first time since Woodrow Wilson we have a national administration that can rightly be characterized as anti-Negro." But Nixon had accurately gauged the national mood. In a resounding victory, the President swept every state save Massachusetts and the largely black District of Columbia in his 1972 reelection.

The continued deterioration of the public perception of the black struggle contributed immeasurably in President Nixon's success. During his years in office the media highlighted the activities of only the most vengeful blacks. The residue of

flickering TV images of armed black students seizing college buildings, of Black Panther shoot-outs with police and the FBI, of the Revolutionary Action Movement conspiring to murder Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young, and of bank robberies and kidnappings by the Symbionese Liberation Army diminished the already nearly exhausted sympathy for the movement. With SNCC no longer in existence, CORE reduced to one of many impotent black nationalist sects, SCLC ripped apart by dissension among King's associates, and the NAACP confining itself once again almost exclusively to the courtroom struggle, Angela Davis and Eldridge Cleaver dominated the airwaves with their exaltation of violent revolution. Disgusted by the mayhem and invective, the vast majority of whites fully approved of Nixon's racial policies.

After Watergate, Gerald Ford appealed to the same backlash emotions as had his predecessor. With less rancor, President Ford maintained Nixon's budgetary freezes and rigorous opposition to school busing. He did nothing to implement the legislative agenda, "Priorities for the Future," submitted by the congressional black caucus, and welcomed the Democratic denunciation of him as "the most veto-prone Republican President in the twentieth century." Ford shelved virtually every bill Congress passed that would have assisted the black poor. The President, in addition, earned the rebuke of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission for accelerating the trend toward resegregation by his resistance to open housing and school desegregation.

Not surprisingly, an estimated 6.6 million blacks gave Jimmy Carter 94 percent of their vote in 1976. The former Governor of Georgia promised to alleviate the plight of the economically and socially disadvantaged, but his performance in office earned him the sobriquet "a second-hand Ford." Blacks were hardly recompensed for their massive support of President Carter. More black judges and more blacks were appointed to significant federal posts than in any previous Administration. And Carter did not seek to inflame racial antagonisms as had Nixon

and Ford. But, like his immediate predecessors, the President never sought to make the perpetuation of racial inequality a central concern of Americans, and he proved as ready to beef up defense spending and balance the budget at the expense of school-lunch programs, financial assistance to black students, and health care for the poor as the Republicans had been. Carter would not expend his moral or political capital in the national debates raging over affirmative action and busing; and he selected as head of the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department a man who hoped publicly that in the fight against segregation "the courts would not overreach." Blacks, moreover, became the chief victims of Carter's unsuccessful battles against inflation and recession. His economic failures resulted in the highest black jobless rate in over a decade, a deterioration of life for the black poor, and a weakening of the tenuous hold on middle-class status that a slim majority of blacks had recently achieved. "It is easy to see why many have concluded," Julian Bond commented, that "we voted for a man who knew the words to our hymns, but not the numbers on our paychecks."

Blacks faced a sorry choice in the 1980 Presidential election. Jimmy Carter asked for their support on the basis of his many black federal appointments, but avoided committing his Administration to alleviating the economic plight of depressed blacks or to pressing for an end to residential or school segregation. The Independent candidacy of John Anderson barely acknowledged the afflictions of Afro-Americans. And the Republican nominee, their old nemesis Ronald Reagan, made clear his continued opposition to busing to achieve racial integration in the schools, to affirmative action, and to the varied government programs designed to aid the poor and the unemployed. The vast majority of blacks voted Democratic, although in fewer numbers and with less unanimity than in 1976. But more than two out of every three white voters opted for the GOP alternative. Again, blacks faced a new Administration hostile to the needs of millions of the jobless and the impoverished, and a

threat to the hopes of millions of middle-class blacks who looked to the White House for assistance in their quest for full inclusion in the American mainstream.

Nor could blacks look confidently to the Supreme Court any longer. The Court had boldly declared in 1969 that every school district was obligated to end dual school systems "at once" and "now and hereafter" to operate only unitary desegregated schools. It followed that with a decision in 1971 which granted broad authority to the district courts to order the desegregation of school systems by busing if necessary. But then the Nixon appointees to the high court signaled a halt, abandoning the familiar yellow school bus as a vehicle of racial reform. Because the suburbs had not themselves caused Detroit's segregation, the Court stated in 1974, that they need not be part of the solution. A five-to-four majority held that the equal-protection clause required racial busing only within school districts and not interdistrict busing. The Supreme Court then further restricted busing in cases involving Pasadena in 1976, Dayton in 1977, and Atlanta in 1980. Despite the near universality of racial apartheid in the housing patterns of metropolitan America, with the consequence that more than a majority of black students in the nation's cities attended schools at least 90 percent black, the Supreme Court rejected busing as the means for integrating the schools and offered no alternative procedure for achieving desegregation, further depressing the hopes that *Brown* had initially raised.

An even more crushing blow to black expectations came from the Supreme Court's 1978 *Bakke* decision declaring unconstitutional the fixed admissions quota for racial minorities of the medical school at the University of California at Davis. Attracting sixty-one *amicus curiae* briefs, more than had ever before been submitted in the history of the Court, the issue of preferential, or compensatory, or affirmative action split the Supreme Court down the middle and resulted in a muddle of six different opinions totaling 154 pages. The single clear point

that emerged was that a majority of Justices explicitly rejected the use of racial quotas as a means of overcoming the accumulated handicaps that past racism had imposed on blacks. The Court retreated a bit in subsequent rulings on racial quotas in 1979 and 1980, approving special help to minorities "narrowly tailored" to remedy proven discrimination. But the impact of *Bakke* reinforced the resurgent white opposition to "reverse discrimination" and weakened the commitment of private and public agencies to assist blacks in achieving equality by considering race in their policies. In 1965 President Johnson had stated: "You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying, now you are free to go where you want, do as you desire and choose the leaders you please. You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'You are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair." Yet that is all that most whites in 1980 would permit. They still wished to avoid the responsibility defined by Johnson fifteen years earlier: "It is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates."

In a gloomy, troubled mood, Afro-Americans thus entered the next to last decade of the twentieth century. A quarter of a century after *Brown*, the United States remained a deeply divided and unequal society. The black struggle had brought significant changes. It achieved substantial progress. Black America in 1980 was radically different from what it had been in 1954. Yet the full promise of the civil-rights revolution was unrealized. Prejudice, discrimination, and segregation, both subtle and blatant, continued to poison social relations. Neither the franchise nor the demolition of legal racism had resulted in equality or justice. The ghetto was still a time bomb, its people social dynamite. Despite all that the movement had accomplished, the hardest and most paramount tasks lay ahead.

"Anyone looking for the civil-rights movement in the streets

is fooling himself. Politics is the civil-rights movement of the 1970s," said the black mayor of Atlanta. "Politics is our first hurrah. It's where things are today." Indeed, the right to vote and the opportunity to hold public office has been one of the most visible changes in Afro-American life since *Brown*; more than a symbol of first-class citizenship, political participation has also produced important, tangible gains for blacks. Fewer than one in four adult blacks in the South could register to vote in 1954; over two-thirds were on the voting lists in 1970. Because of that turnout, white officials found their traditional race-baiting rhetoric and practices no longer politically profitable. A onetime militant segregationist, Senator Strom Thurmond of South Carolina quickly realized the political wisdom of sending his child to a desegregated school. Even George Wallace saw the light. The former leader of Alabama's white supremacist forces appointed blacks to high state positions, crowned a black homecoming queen at the very university he had once sworn to deny to black students, and in 1979 sat on the podium applauding the inaugural remarks of Birmingham's first black mayor. By 1980, Mississippi, the state that had most violently and thoroughly resisted the civil-rights movement, claimed more black officeholders than any other state.

The number of black elected public officials in the South rose from fewer than a hundred in the year of the Voting Rights Act to some 500 in 1970, 1,600 in 1975, and nearly 2,500 in 1980. Equally impressive, the national total jumped from 300 in 1965, to 1,400 in 1970, 3,000 in 1975, and 4,700 in 1980. The number of black mayors of towns and cities leaped from none in 1965 to eighty in 1970 and to 120 in 1980, including Atlanta, Dayton, Gary, Detroit, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Newark, Richmond, and Washington, D.C. In the main, cities with black mayors spent more per capita for education and social services, and directed a higher proportion of their budgets toward the needs of the disadvantaged, than those headed by whites. Black mayors, overall, also did more than their white

counterparts to establish affirmative-action programs in municipal agencies and to enforce a less biased, less brutal, law-enforcement system. The slightly over one thousand blacks who served on city councils and in the state legislatures in 1980 had a similarly incremental yet important effect on policies and priorities.

At the national level, blacks held eighteen seats in Congress in the late 1970s. They had held none between 1901 and 1928, only one in the following fifteen years, and just two between the end of the Second World War and Brown. In 1970, the congressional black caucus was established. Augmenting its presence were scores of blacks in sub-Cabinet-level leadership positions and in highly visible offices filled by the President. By the end of the decade, Carter had appointed two black Cabinet officers, two black ambassadors to the UN, a half dozen black ambassadors to foreign countries, a black Solicitor General, a black Secretary of the Army, a host of black United States attorneys and United States marshals, and numerous black justices to the federal district courts and the United States courts of appeals.

"You don't have to demonstrate when you can pick up a phone and call someone," claimed Andrew Young. Yet politics has not proved a panacea. It has not changed the basic inequalities between blacks and whites. Excessive black loyalty to one political party has been fatal. The Democrats take black votes for granted and do not adequately reward them. Yet, given the steady rightward drift of the Republicans, few blacks conceive the GOP to be a viable alternative. Blacks, moreover, remain on the fringe of national politics. Despite impressive gains, blacks held fewer than one percent of the nation's half a million elective offices in 1980, and just three percent of them in the South, where they constituted 20 percent of the population. Over half the hundred counties in the South with majority black populations still had no elected black officials. Whites in

power there used all manner of subtle disenfranchising devices to sap black political strength.

Blacks, nationwide, participated in politics more infrequently than whites. Some explained this as a consequence of poverty; the poor, regardless of color, vote less than the middle and upper classes. Others thought it was due to black alienation from the political system. Still others considered it a legacy of past exclusion, when blacks became conditioned not to vote or join political organizations. Whatever the reasons, blacks in the 1970s engaged in less political activity than whites. Just one half of the 14 million blacks who could have voted bothered to register in 1972. Two years later, only a third of those eligible voted in the congressional elections. Barely 42 percent of voting-age blacks went to the polls in 1976, compared to a national turnout of 55 percent of eligible voters, and even fewer sought to exercise their franchise in 1980. Most important, black politics has not provided jobs for the jobless, adequate housing and health care for the poor, or quality integrated schooling. In Greene County, Alabama, where blacks control the entire political structure, the average black family income is about \$2,500. Seventy percent of black homes in rural Alabama have no indoor flush toilet. Despite a black mayor and a phalanx of black officials, Newark in 1980 remains as spiritually and physically dilapidated as it was in 1967. Although the blacks in South Carolina constitute a quarter of the population—and are well represented politically—over half are in the most menial and lowest-paying jobs, and fewer than 5 percent are in managerial or professional positions. Atlanta and Detroit, with its official posts heavily black, have few jobs for their black youth and the highest unemployment rate for adult blacks in the country.

More black students attended segregated schools in 1980 than at the time of Brown. Only in the South has there been some progress. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, combined with an increasingly tougher stance by the federal courts and government officials responsible for implementing desegregation guidelines, brought significant results below the Mason-Dixon line. The proportion of Southern blacks in desegregated schools rose from 2 percent in 1964 to 14 percent in 1966, 16 percent in 1967, 20 percent in 1968, and 58 percent in 1970. The following year, President Nixon warned federal officials to stop pressing for desegregation or find other jobs. Two years later, the Supreme Court began its about-face by barring the busing of Virginia schoolchildren across city-suburban lines. Resegregation commenced. White flight to the suburbs, tracking, segregated private academies, and segregated church schools resulted once again in fewer than half the black students in the South attending desegregated schools in 1980. Significantly, much of the South's integration is rural. In Southern cities, where the population is growing, the late 1970s witnessed rapidly decreasing desegregation. The urban South appeared more and more similar to its Northern counterpart, where over two-thirds of the blacks went to schools at least 90 percent black. The absence of any considerable move toward residential desegregation, the refusal of the courts to order busing to eliminate de facto segregation, and the rejection by virtually every white suburb of suggestions to redraw attendance zones across school districts in order to foster integration, insured the continuance of the trend toward greater racial isolation in education.

Striking changes did come in the educational levels of blacks. Although sometimes of questionable quality, black schooling has steadily increased in quantity since *Brown*. Then, about 75 percent of blacks aged five to nineteen were enrolled in school. Over 95 percent were in 1980. The median school years completed by blacks aged twenty-five to twenty-nine rose from 8.6 in 1954 (3.5 years fewer than whites), to 10.8 in 1960 (about 2.5 years fewer than whites), to 12.7 in 1972 (only .4 of one year less than whites). In 1980, about 75 percent of black

students were finishing high school, compared to 85 percent for whites. Two decades earlier, only some 40 percent of young blacks finished high school. In addition, 20 percent of blacks aged eighteen to twenty-four enrolled in college in 1980, compared to 26 percent for whites. The percentage of black high school graduates going to college (31.5 percent) had nearly caught up with that of whites (32.2 percent). In 1954, 75,000 blacks attended college; 234,000 did so in 1963; about a half million, 7 percent of the total college population, attended in 1970; and over a million blacks did so in 1977, constituting 10 percent of the total college enrollment. This substantial progress was due largely to the increased availability of financial aid, the growth of community colleges, and greater access to predominantly white universities. Where 82 percent of black college students in the South enrolled in all-black institutions in 1965, 43 percent did in 1976. Still, at the end of the 1970s, blacks lagged considerably behind whites in graduating from college and being awarded baccalaureate degrees. Nearly six of ten black college students went to two-year rather than four-year institutions of higher education in 1980.

Perhaps the least change of all since *Brown* came in residential segregation. Despite court rulings and legislation outlawing racial discrimination in housing, such discrimination persisted. The index of residential segregation rose in nearly every American city between 1960 and 1980. Whites of every class continued to resist housing integration if it involved anything other than token numbers of blacks. Twelve percent of the population, blacks in 1980 accounted for less than 6 percent of the suburban population, barely an increase of 2 percent in more than twenty years. And most black suburbanites lived in all-black suburbs, usually the older, run-down industrial suburbs deserted by whites. The majority of America's 25 million blacks in 1980 had been confined to the inner cities of a score of metropolitan areas, mainly Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, New Orleans, New York,

Philadelphia, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C., fulfilling the prophesy, and not heeding the warning, of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in 1968: "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal."

Two unequal societies also developed within the black cities: a black middle class struggling to move upward or to maintain a tenuous grip on their precarious new status, and a sinking, permanent black underclass mired in poverty and despair. Those who justified a diminution of public and private efforts to end racial inequality overemphasized the extent of progress made by the black middle class and obscured the magnitude of the predicament of those left behind. They trumpeted the news of the absolute gains in the number of jobs for blacks, of the decline of the percentage of black families below the poverty line, and of the narrowing of the income gap between black and white workers, especially female wage earners. They made much of the proliferation of blacks in well-paying positions and in occupations never before open to them.

A far different picture, and a more accurate gauge of black economic progress, emerges from the statistics on median family income. In 1954, black families earned approximately 53 percent of what white families did. It gradually inched up to 60 percent in 1969, then to 62 percent in 1975. But it plummeted to 57 percent in 1979. Blacks had gained four percentage points in a quarter of a century. At that rate, racial equality in family income would come in 250 years. Median income in 1979 stood at \$9,242 for black families and \$16,740 for white families. Undeterred by this dismal prognosis, critics of plans for programs by the federal government to correct the imbalance argued the need to factor out of these all-inclusive national averages anomalies based on age, geography, and sex. They preferred to stress the fact that stable black families in the North earned incomes nearly equal to those of whites. That was

true. But such families constituted a minority of black families, and a dwindling minority at that.

Blacks did earn less in the South, both absolutely and relative to whites, than in the North. In 1975, when the national median income for all black families was \$8,779, 62 percent of that for whites, the same amount in the South was \$7,696, 59 percent of that earned by Southern white families. But half the blacks in the country lived in the South in 1980, and that percentage is not slackening. "Freedomland" lost its luster in the 1970s, and for the first time in the twentieth century blacks reversed the pattern of migration from South to North. The Northern states experienced a net loss of 64,000 blacks between 1970 and 1975, and 104,000 between 1975 and 1977. Similarly, the black working population is proportionately younger than the white, and younger workers earn less than older ones, thus further depressing the overall median earning of blacks; and there is little likelihood of that trend changing in the near future. In 1970, the median age for white Americans was twenty-eight years and 21.2 for blacks, and the greater fertility rate for blacks in the seventies promises a still greater differential. Add to that the fact that lower family income necessitates more blacks entering the job market at an earlier age than whites, and the probability of blacks narrowing the income gap dims appreciably.

The dramatic increase in one-parent black families affected the relative economic decline of blacks more than any other factor. While the proportion of white families with more than one wage earner rose steadily in the seventies, the proportion of such black families decreased from 57 percent in 1969 to 46 percent in 1979. While the proportion of white families headed by a woman has hovered at about 10 percent since 1965, the comparable figures for blacks jumped from 23.7 percent that year to 34 percent in 1974, 37 percent in 1976, and 40 percent in 1980. A devastating half of all one-parent black families lived below the poverty line in 1978, compared to fewer than

a third of such white families. Most important, nearly two-thirds of all black families living in poverty were headed by women, and the number of those families continues to soar, as does the number of children in such families. One in three blacks lived in poverty in 1980, compared to one in ten whites, and in all likelihood the number of black poor, both absolute and relative to whites, will mushroom in the decade ahead.

The prospects for the black middle class are less certain. Great gains had been made since the civil-rights movement began. Although a third of all blacks lived in poverty, and another 15 percent eked out a bare existence just above the official poverty line, a majority of black families in 1980 earned over \$10,000, including nearly 13 percent with incomes over \$25,000. But those blacks climbing the social ladder could slip easily. Many are heavily dependent on public-sector jobs, and government at all levels is being forced to retrench. Conservatism is in the saddle, driving hard to cut government spending and balance budgets. The rightward trend also threatens the continuation of affirmative-action programs responsible for the middle-class status of many blacks.

Overall, black improvement came because of an expanding economy. Black progress did not come at the expense of whites. The United States made a bigger economic pie, but it did not slice it differently than it had in previous decades. As the eighties began, however, the forecast was for years of scarcity, a dwindling of resources to be shared by yet more people. That did not bode well for blacks aspiring for more, or even aspiring to maintain past gains. By 1980, in fact, double-digit inflation and recession had already significantly eroded part of the moderate advancement made by blacks in the early 1970s. Blacks had good reason to be troubled as they faced the future.

What appeared most certain is that any future progress would require persistent organized struggle, as it had in the past. The attainment of civil rights by the movement resulted from the blacks themselves taking up the fight and making the ultimate

commitment. A renewed battle would be needed to hold prior gains and to expand them so that the mass of blacks who have not yet shared the fruits of the struggle can do so someday. A Third Reconstruction, aiming for economic justice, is imperative if civil rights are to be meaningful to the poor and unemployed, to all those still in despair. Just as the First Reconstruction foundered on the failure of the federal government to establish a viable economic base for the freed slaves, so the Second did not result in equality because of the lack of a thorough economic transformation in the status of Afro-America. Despite the end of Jim Crow, the black struggle did not result in racial equality.

The mighty triumphs over legally enforced segregation and disenfranchisement proved the capacity of blacks to compel change. They augmented black self-respect, power, and understanding of what remains to be done. Because of the movement, blacks today are far closer to equality than they had been in 1954. As a consequence of the struggle, blacks are now in an immensely better position to launch a Third Reconstruction. However dark the moment seems, a new day will surely dawn. The struggle to complete the unfinished business of American democracy will endure until its fulfillment.

