

CHAPTER SIX

THE SHIELD OF SEGREGATION

Ugh!" Theodore Roosevelt exclaimed. "I have got to wash my hands." As so often during his presidency, he had just shaken hands with hundreds, even thousands, of visitors to the White House. Now, on this day early in 1909, he hurried upstairs to find a washbasin. It had been a gilded affair, a full-dress reception for army and navy officers, replete with cabinet members, diplomats, and Supreme Court justices. But Roosevelt felt soiled, even threatened, by his contact with these people. "Ugh!" he exclaimed again. "Shaking hands with a thousand people! What a lot of bugs I have on my hands, and how dirty, filthy I am!" The President washed his hands immediately. "Now I am clean," he said with relief.¹

In this diverse, industrializing nation, Americans had to put up with people different from themselves. Even presidents had to mingle with constituents. But when and where they could, many Americans pulled back from people who seemed different. Frightened, wary, or, like Roosevelt, repelled by contact with others, people drew boundary lines around themselves. This impulse to separate was fundamental to American society. The early twentieth century became the great age of segregation in the United States, a time of enforced public separations. The word *segregation* itself took on its modern definition in the first years of the new century: *segregation* meant "Jim Crow," the laws and practices that separated white from black in the states of the

old Confederacy. Americans have liked to pretend that Jim Crow was a regional aberration, an exception to our history. But segregation was not something that happened only in the South—boundary lines were established everywhere in the early twentieth-century United States. And segregation did not happen only to African-Americans: the boundary lines also set apart Native Americans, immigrants, and workers.²

Progressives seldom contested the increasing division of Americans into separate enclaves. In fact, middle-class activists and their political representatives eagerly led some of the campaigns to draw new social boundary lines dividing different groups. The progressives' support for segregation is, at first glance, surprising. Believing in "association," progressives so often tried to bring diverse people together. Believing in their power to manipulate the social and material environment, progressives so often refused to accept difference as a fundamental fact of national life; people could be changed and thus made more alike. But there were limits to the progressives' optimistic faith in transforming other people. Segregation revealed both a sense of realism and an underlying pessimism in the middle class. Even as they labored urgently to end the differences between classes, the progressives felt some social differences would not be erased for many years. And some differences, they believed, could not be erased at all.

Segregation was a complicated social phenomenon, and it served a complicated purpose for the progressives. Superficially a deviation from progressivism, segregation actually drew on basic progressive values and aims. True to their mission to create a safe society for themselves and their children, the progressives turned to segregation as a way to halt dangerous social conflict that could not otherwise be stopped. True to their sense of compassion, the progressives turned to segregation as a way to preserve weaker groups, such as African-Americans and Native Americans, facing brutality and even annihilation. Unlike some other Americans, progressives did not support segregation out of anger, hatred, and a desire to unify whites; but they certainly displayed plenty of condescension and indifference, as well as compassion. Segregation was never the separation of equals; one party always ended up with less—less power, less wealth, less opportunity, less schooling, less health care, less respect. Progressives fairly readily accepted the inequitable arrangement of segregation. They did so because usually there were worse alternatives. Most of the progressives told themselves that separation allowed reform to con-

tinue. Protected by the shield of segregation, the fundamental process of transforming people could go on in safety. But the cost was great.³



On Monday, July 23, 1900, a steamy day in the city of New Orleans, something gave inside Robert Charles. Thirty-four, unmarried, unemployed, ill-read, and black, Charles was upset over the violence and discrimination directed against African-Americans in the South; the son of Mississippi slaves, he doubted that blacks had any future in the United States. That night he was waiting on a doorstep with his roommate Lenard Pierce for two black women when a white policeman told the men to move on. Charles, dark brown, six feet tall, and strong, got up, the policeman struck him with a billy club and pulled a gun. Charles took out his own .38 Smith & Wesson; both men fired; both were wounded in the leg. Charles ran away to his apartment on Fourth Street, where the police confronted him later that night. Pointing his Winchester rifle, Charles shot police captain John Day through the heart. "You——," Charles yelled, "I will give you all some!" He shot a patrolman through the eye, and escaped again.⁴

The next day policemen and white mobs looked for Robert Charles. These white citizens of New Orleans had their frustrations, too. Black men like Charles seemed to threaten white jobs and white women. Less and less willing to mix with African-Americans at all, many whites had unhappily watched the state legislature defeat a bill that would have segregated the city's streetcars. Now whites noticed that blacks were obviously satisfied with Charles's "war on whites." So the police arrested African-Americans that day, but no one could find Charles, this "monster" and "unreasoning brute," this "ruthless black butcher" and "bloodthirsty champion of African supremacy." On Wednesday, the twenty-fifth, frustrated whites met at the monument to Robert E. Lee and resolved to lynch Robert Charles. Thousands marched to the parish prison and to the Storyville vice district, but in vain: no Charles. That night, whites killed three African-Americans and sent about fifty to the hospital. For good measure, the mobs killed two whites accidentally and, when refused rides on the streetcars, beat three white streetcar workers. On Thursday, whites killed three blacks and hurt at least fifteen more—but still no Charles. Then, on Friday, an African-American revealed Charles's hideout on Saratoga Street. When the police turned up, Charles

shot and killed a sergeant and a corporal. As hundreds and then thousands of people surrounded and fired into the building, Charles killed three more whites and wounded nineteen. When the mob accidentally set fire to the building in an attempt to smoke him out, Charles emerged, wounded but with his derby cocked defiantly on his head. Somehow he made it across the street and into a room, where a policeman shot him dead.

That was not the end, however. The mob shot Charles's body over and over; they pulled it into the street, where the son of one of the dead policemen smashed Charles's face. Three more black men died that day, uncounted others were beaten, and a black school was set ablaze. Finally, some weeks later, Lewis Forstall, an African-American, shot and killed the black man who had ratted on Robert Charles.

The Robert Charles riot reminded people of what they knew deep down: of all the social differences at the start of the twentieth century, those between black and white were the most volatile, the most difficult to control. Southerners understood that truth best of all. Seven million, nine hundred twenty-three thousand African-Americans, 90 percent of blacks in America, lived in the South; blacks made up 32 percent of the region's population. After the Civil War, the abolition of slavery and the reconstruction of the South had empowered African-Americans and threatened white Southerners. But in the 1870s and 1880s, blacks had seemingly been contained; the white Redeemers had thrust African-Americans decisively back into their "place." Violence, intimidation, and fraud kept them from political power; the sharecropping system bound them to white landowners and merchants. Yet, as the Charles riot made plain, race relations had not been controlled after all. Old passions and new truths had combined to stir up the South toward the end of the nineteenth century.⁵

For all the hyperbole of its boosters, the "New South" of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was an unsettling place. The uneven, painful processes of urbanization and industrialization were transforming the region and creating a new terrain for race relations. In the growing cities and towns of the New South, in Birmingham, Atlanta, Spartanburg, and Durham, white and black were thrown together in streets, restaurants, schools, and other public places. At the gates of sawmills, iron mills, and cotton mills, the races jostled each other in the search for jobs. On the land, things seemed more stable, even stagnant, but Southern agriculture was

going through its own difficult transformation: hard times on the farm and the relative decline of the countryside made the races uncomfortably aware of each other. The New South created new people, too. The younger whites who had not grown up with the paternalist example of the old antebellum planter class, were less tolerant of blacks. Equally, there were "New Negroes," young black men like Robert Charles, less deferential because they had not grown up in slavery. There was also a new African-American middle class of well-dressed landholders and business owners whose visible success mocked the failures of poorer whites. Upper-class whites had their own frightening "New Negroes"—the African-Americans of the Farmer's Alliance and the People's Party who made common cause with poor whites against the Democratic Party, the railroads, the merchants, and all the men in power. The New South was unstable, not only because it divided black and white but because it still might unite them.⁶

Under the circumstances, many Southern whites, out of unthinking emotion or cool calculation, had new reason to turn on blacks. The result was a fresh brand of racism, hysterical and harsh, proclaimed in legislatures, country stores, and newspaper columns. The titles of popular books summed up the essential racist message—*The Negro a Beast*; *The Negro: A Menace to American Civilization*. African-Americans, no longer raised in the stern school of slavery, were said to be headed back into primitive, uncontrolled savagery. Running through all this was an irrational fear of black sexual competition, of the bestial "New Negro" who preyed on white women. That fear, which also testified to the tensions between white men and women in the Victorian South, produced torrents of lurid rhetoric. In the United States Senate in 1907, Democrat Ben Tillman of South Carolina portrayed blacks "pulsating with the desire to sate their passions upon white maidens and wives"; he described the white Southern victim, "her body prostituted, her purity destroyed . . . robbed of the jewel of her womanhood by a black fiend." "Our brains reel under the staggering blow and hot blood surges to the heart . . .," Tillman railed. "We revert to the original savage."⁷

Some white Southerners did just that. Seemingly determined not to coexist with blacks, these people turned to violence. They went, the Alabama minister and progressive Edgar Gardner Murphy observed, "from the contention that no negro shall vote to the contention that no negro shall learn, that no negro shall labor, and . . . that no negro shall live." In towns

and cities across the region, there were fights and race riots. As in New Orleans in 1900, so in Wilmington, North Carolina, in 1898. In rural areas especially, there was the lynching party. Rebecca Latimer Felton of Georgia, a Methodist layleader and journalist, urged white men to do their duty. "[If] it takes lynching to protect woman's dearest possession from drunken, ravening human beasts," Felton exclaimed in 1897, "then I say lynch a thousand a week if it becomes necessary." They never did manage that thousand a week, but mobs of Southern whites answered Felton's call. What had been mainly a way for white Americans to whip and discipline other whites became an increasingly vicious means for Southern whites to exterminate blacks. Nationwide, lynchings escalated in the 1880s and peaked at 230 in 1892. The numbers fell off somewhat because black men took pains to avoid trouble. Even so, there were 115 reported lynchings in America in 1900; 106 of the victims were black. Essentially unchecked by local, state, or national government, white Southerners usually invoked some imaginary assault on a white woman in order to murder a black man. There were hangings, shootings, burnings, castrations. Afterward, interested whites might claim an ear, a toe, or a finger as a keepsake, perhaps a souvenir watch fob. "You don't understand how we feel down here," a Mississippian told a Northern visitor in 1908; "when there is a row, we feel like killing a nigger whether he has done anything or not." A Mississippi African-American summed up the vulnerability of his race. "They had to have a license to kill anything but a nigger," he recalled. "We was always in season."⁸

To more-moderate whites, including progressives and the wealthy, it seemed as if the South had gone out of control. These men and women were disgusted by the lynch mobs. The lyncher, wrote Andrew Sledd, professor of Latin and Greek at Atlanta's Emory College, in 1902, acted "to gratify the brute in his own soul, which the thin veneer of his elemental civilization has not been able effectually to conceal." Whites like Sledd preferred the antebellum slaveholders' paternalist judgment of African-Americans: the black man was a submissive child, not an uncontrollable beast. Moreover, the moderates understood some basic realities: blacks were too numerous, their labor too important, for them to be driven from the South; corrupt elections, extralegal lynching parties, and race riots threatened the social order, damaged the region's reputation, and put economic development at risk. Obviously, there had to be some new means of stabilizing race relations.⁹

The solution, crafted in the 1890s and the 1900s, was a dramatic intensification and codification of segregation. White and black had been divided in many ways since the end of the Civil War, but now separation of the races became the regional creed, a way of life—"the elementary working hypothesis of civilization in our Southern States," as Edgar Gardner Murphy put it. "Ours is a world of inexorable divisions," he explained. "[G]ood fences make good neighbors." Those divisions were achieved through an intricate process of accommodation and challenge that proceeded unevenly but inexorably across the South. Everywhere, what had been *de facto* in the late nineteenth century became *de jure* by the twentieth; new segregation laws made the racial boundaries clearer, more rigid. Through differing mixtures of law and custom, every Southern town, city, county, and state tried to achieve two goals: first, to send an unmistakable message of racial inequality that would intimidate blacks and reassure whites; second, to deprive blacks of so much economic and political opportunity that they could never threaten white power.¹⁰

So whites arranged to put African-Americans in their "place" once again. More than ever before, that "place" was a literal, physical space as well as a matter of psychology and behavior. By statute and unwritten rule, whites denied blacks equal access to public facilities. African-Americans could not get into many hotels, restaurants, theaters, saloons, pool halls, bathhouses, swimming pools, and hospitals at all. They could get into other public places only by accepting segregated, inferior accommodations—back pews in churches, back seats in streetcars, balcony "nigger heavens" in theaters, "nigger cars" on railroad trains. And of course, black children had to attend separate schools—and of course, those schools were grossly underfunded. There was also a trend toward residential segregation in the early twentieth-century South. Traditionally, in towns and cities, blacks had often lived close to whites in servants' quarters or back alleys, in unimposing buildings across a street or a vacant lot. Now, even in such older communities as New Orleans, Charleston, and Savannah, white prejudice and economic forces were increasingly consigning blacks to their own sections of town. No Southern community had a true ghetto sealing off virtually all of the black population, but many towns and cities had one or more predominantly African-American sections, known predictably enough as "dark-town" and "niggertown."

Jim Crow reached into the economy as well. In the tobacco business, the skilled jobs went to whites, the unskilled jobs, to blacks. African-Americans could get manual work in the iron mines and foundries of northern Alabama and in the bituminous coal mines of Tennessee and Kentucky. But the cotton mills of the Piedmont were for whites only. In general, blacks were condemned to the dirtiest, least skilled, lowest paying, most demeaning jobs—the "nigger work" of gang labor and domestic service.

Segregation also drew boundary lines through politics. For years since Reconstruction, whites had resorted to violence and fraud to keep down the black vote. Now, powerful whites turned to the law, to legalized disfranchisement, to keep blacks away from the ballot box without violence. Beginning with a constitutional convention in Mississippi in 1890, disfranchisement swept across the states of the old Confederacy in the next two decades. The effect of legal change on black voter turnout was harsh and unambiguous: there was about a 60 percent drop in black voting after suffrage restriction. By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, Southern African-Americans were almost as far from the levers of power as they had been in slavery.¹¹

Although Jim Crow exacted countless costs, it was not the worst possibility for African-Americans, as progressives and other moderate whites rationalized. An ongoing race war or expulsion from the South could have been far worse. Were it not for segregation, wrote one of Mississippi's white newspaper editors in 1910, the state would have had "more race clashes and dead niggers than have been heard of since reconstruction." It was a self-serving remark, but truthful too. The boundaries of Jim Crow seemed to bring a measure of stability to the South: lynchings fell off from 115 nationwide in 1900 to 57 in 1905. For whites, there was no reason to doubt that segregation had indeed become "the elementary working hypothesis of civilization in our Southern States." And there was no reason to doubt that Jim Crow was there to stay.¹²

Certainly the North was unlikely to intervene, in part because the region had its own difficulties with race relations. As the African-American leader W. E. B. Du Bois observed in 1901, "The Negro Problem is not the sole property of the South." At the turn of the century, there were only 90,000 African-Americans outside the Southern states. Living mainly in Northern cities and towns, these blacks made up less than 1 percent of the

non-Southern population. But they posed a problem to many whites nonetheless. The passage of civil rights laws after the Civil War had hardly wiped away old antagonisms in the Northern states. Most whites held an enduring stereotype of backward "darkies" and "coons," expressed by such songs as "All Coons Look Alike to Me" and such vaudeville figures as Doolittle Black and Julius Crow. White Northerners also heard and read about the alleged brutality of the African-American; like white Southerners, they could think of the black man as a beast and a competitor. As black Southerners began to flee Jim Crow and rural poverty, the prospect of economic competition loomed. By 1906, an observer could already note the "prevailing dread of an overwhelming influx from the South." And so, Northern race relations had their own volatility. In New York City in August 1900, one month after the Charles riot in New Orleans, a race riot broke out in the Tenderloin, the black section on the West Side of Manhattan. As in New Orleans, it began with an altercation between a black man and a white policeman; as in New Orleans, a policeman died; as in New Orleans, white mobs, aided and abetted by the police, staged a "nigger chase" through the streets.¹³

Accordingly, the North drew its own boundaries between black and white. The Northern version of segregation was generally milder than Southern Jim Crow, not because Northern whites were more virtuous but because blacks were less numerous and therefore less dangerous. Whites in the North did not insist so much on writing Jim Crow into state and local law, and they did not segregate their communities quite as thoroughly. Still, Northern segregation resembled Southern segregation in important respects. As in the South, communities kept African-Americans out of hotels, restaurants, theaters, and parks or condemned them to inferior accommodations. Such cities as Boston and New Haven retained integrated schools, but many other communities made sure black and white children did not learn in the same classrooms. Northern churches became less receptive to black worshippers; the Young Men's Christian Association did not want black members. Occasionally the Northern segregators did their work with almost Southern flair. In Cincinnati, the white members of the YMCA, to make sure that there was no implication of racial equality, even compelled local African-Americans to rename their own organization the "Young Boys' Christian Association."

The trend toward residential segregation was at least as strong in the North as in the South. Northern cities did not yet have the kind of black ghettos that would develop later in the twentieth century. African-Americans often shared neighborhoods with predominantly working-class white immigrants who could not afford to live elsewhere. But especially as migration from the South increased, Northern communities were quickly developing predominantly black districts. New York had the Tenderloin and San Juan Hill; Cleveland had Central Avenue; other towns and cities had their own "Niggertown," "Buzzard's Alley," "Bronzeville," "Nigger Row," "Chinch Row," or "Black Bottom." Typically, these neighborhoods had poor housing and poor sanitation. The police usually allowed vice districts, with gambling and prostitution, to develop there too. In all, these were dangerous places to live. San Juan Hill got its name because the sharp incline up West Sixtieth Street and the numerous racial battles reminded New Yorkers of Theodore Roosevelt's famous charge up a Cuban hill of the same name during the war with Spain; "Death Avenue," the district's western boundary, got its name because so many black children died on the open railroad tracks of Eleventh Avenue. African-Americans lived in such places, of course, because limited incomes and white prejudice made it difficult to go anywhere else in town. Members of the small black middle class had the wherewithal to move into better white neighborhoods, but these men and women ran into hostile white homeowners and realtors. In some areas, whites were already resorting to restrictive covenants to make sure blacks would stay out.¹⁴

Economic segregation was a reality in the North as well as in the South. Clustered in low-status occupations, Northern African-Americans had trouble getting manufacturing jobs, joining unions, and keeping positions as waiters and barbers. Blacks' reputations as strikebreakers made relations with white workers even more tense. In politics, at least, Northern blacks did not face disfranchisement in the twentieth century. But their political power was eroding. African-Americans held fewer state and local offices and played a smaller role in political parties. "The plain fact is," progressive journalist Ray Stannard Baker confirmed in 1909, "most of us in the north do not believe in any real democracy as between white and colored men."¹⁵

Baker was guilty of understatement. Even white progressives, North as well as South, did not believe in any sort of equality between the races at the turn of the century. A time of environmentalist thinking, the Progres-

sive Era was equally a time of race thinking. As the nineteenth century ended, science increasingly endorsed many Americans' belief that some races were better than others and that racial characteristics were hereditary and therefore quite possibly unalterable. Influenced by these ideas, whites and progressives held a range of opinions about race. Some, like Social Gospel leader Josiah Strong, were equally ardent believers in the superiority of Anglo-Saxons—"all-conquering," "more vigorous, more spiritual, more Christian"—to all other races in the United States and around the globe. "Is there room for doubt," Strong demanded, "that this race . . . is destined to dispossess many weaker races, assimilate others, and mold the remainder, until, in a very true and important sense, it has Anglo-Saxonized mankind?" A few reformers, like the Illinois factory inspector, New York settlement house resident, socialist, and journalist William English Walling, were ardent supporters of black rights. Condemning "race hatred," Walling insisted that "we must come to treat the negro on a plane of absolute political and social equality." The majority of progressives, clinging to a firm belief in African-American inferiority, fit somewhere in between. Most Northern progressives said notably little about their racial views. By and large, it was an awareness of class differences, not racial differences, that animated middle-class reform. Firm believers in white superiority, most progressives were nevertheless more interested in making the world middle-class than in making it Anglo-Saxon.¹⁶

White progressives in the South did not have the luxury of silence about race. Perhaps the best known Southern reformer, Edgar Gardner Murphy, spoke out frequently on the subject; in the process, he made very clear how well segregation fit with progressive values. Murphy approached the question of African-Americans' status from both the pessimistic perspective of race thinking and the optimistic perspective of environmentalism. "There is a distinct assumption of the negro's inferiority," he said; "but there is also a distinct assumption of the negro's improvable. It is upon the basis of this double assumption that the South finds its obligation." That obligation was to abandon antiblack violence and institute segregation. In addition to halting racial strife, Jim Crow would, Murphy believed, allow the process of reform to continue among African-Americans as it did elsewhere among whites. Safe behind the racial boundary line, Southern blacks were becoming new people. "The segregation of the race has thrown its members upon their

own powers and has developed the qualities of resourcefulness . . . the noblest of the gifts of freedom, the power of personal and social self-dependence," Murphy maintained. "The very process which may have seemed to some like a policy of oppression has in fact resulted in a process of development." Furthermore, Jim Crow was swelling the ranks of the black middle class. Murphy rejoiced that "the social and educational separation of these races has created the opportunity and the vocation of the negro teacher, the negro physician, the negro lawyer, the negro leader of whatever sort." Such developments would continue, Murphy knew, if the South responded to his urgent crusade for better education for blacks as well as whites. In typically progressive terms, Murphy concluded that government activism could change the environment of African-Americans and therefore improve the race. "The fact that the negro is a negro, the State may not alter," he acknowledged; "but the fact that the negro—quite as much at the North as at the South—has not been adequately accorded the economic support of the profounder social forces of security, opportunity, and hope, the State may largely alter if it will. Will it do?" Murphy and other progressives believed the answer should be "yes"—as long as the boundary lines of segregation remained firmly drawn.¹⁷

Those Southern politicians dependent on progressive support repeated Murphy's argument in somewhat cruder form. In 1901, Governor Charles Brantley Aycock of North Carolina put the case for Jim Crow bluntly to a black audience. "No thoughtful, conservative, and upright Southerner has for your race aught but the kindest feelings, and we are willing and anxious to see you grow into the highest citizenship of which you are capable," he explained:

But to do this it is absolutely necessary that each race should remain distinct, and have a society of its own. Inside of your own race you can grow as large and broad and high as God permits. . . . But all of them in the South will insist that you shall accomplish this high end without social intermingling.

For Aycock and other Southern leaders, there were no alternatives. Segregation's "violation," the governor bluntly warned his black audience, "would be to your destruction. . . ."¹⁸

As Jim Crow took hold with progressive support or acquiescence, the highest levels of the federal government did virtually nothing to help black Americans. Not surprisingly, the conservative United States Supreme Court gave segregation its imprimatur. In 1896, a majority of the justices ruled in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that segregation was legal on Louisiana trains as long as blacks were provided "separate but equal" accommodations.

The progressive presidents were not going to contest the ascendancy of "separate but equal," no matter how truly unequal the state of affairs for blacks in the South and in the North. Theodore Roosevelt shared the progressives' condescending view of African-Americans. For the President, race was a crucial, though often vague, category. In private, racial epithets came easily to his lips—his was a world of "micks," "dagos," "chinks," and "japs." Race had multiple meanings for him: it referred to the distinctions of color, the differences among white, red, black, and yellow; it conjured up a romantic vision of a superior white Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic heritage; it included a "bio-social" theory that acquired characteristics could be inherited. This was perhaps the most hopeful aspect of the President's thinking about race. A neo-Lamarckian, Roosevelt believed that environment and culture could modify heredity. Although races could go wrong and decline over time, presumably they could also improve. Yet, Roosevelt held out little hope for blacks. The President carefully avoided calling African-Americans "niggers," but he had no doubts about their merits. He confided to a friend in 1906 that "as a race and in the mass they are altogether inferior to the whites." As always with Roosevelt, class made a difference: he approved of more refined, middle-class blacks. But African-Americans could never be assimilated into the national "Race"; there could be no intermarriage with whites.¹⁹

These ideas pushed Roosevelt toward a position rather similar to that of the progressives. Like them, he had a paternalist view of the black race. Like them, he deplored violence and instability. Like them, he considered Jim Crow preferable to turmoil as a solution for "the terrible problem offered by the presence of the negro on this continent." So, rather than use federal power to mitigate segregation, he preferred to let the South handle its own race problems. "The white man who can be of most use to the colored man is that colored man's neighbor," Roosevelt explained. "It is the southern people themselves who must and can solve the difficulties that exist in the South."²⁰

Believing he needed the support of black Southern Republicans, the so-called Black-and-Tans, in order to assure his nomination in 1904, Roosevelt did appoint some "colored men of good repute and standing" to federal jobs. In the process, he consulted Booker T. Washington on patronage matters and invited him to the White House for dinner in October 1901. But that invitation angered Southern whites. The Washington dinner was, according to a Memphis paper, "the most damnable outrage that has ever been perpetrated by a citizen of the United States." Washington never dined at the White House again. Although Roosevelt relished standing his ground on some disputed appointments, he remained the careful politician. Safely nominated and reelected in 1904, Roosevelt leaned away from the Black-and-Tans toward their white Republican rivals, the Southern "Lily Whites." Touring the South in 1905, the President reassured whites by stressing his Southern background and his admiration for the South, the Confederacy, and Robert E. Lee; he even sent roses to Stonewall Jackson's widow. It was, said a black leader, "national treachery to the Negro."²¹

Roosevelt condemned lynching during his second term, but he also revealed his profound reservations about African-Americans.²² In an infamous episode in 1906, Roosevelt dishonorably discharged 170 black soldiers of the U.S. Army who had declined to tell what they knew, if anything, about a nighttime rampage through streets of the inhospitable town of Brownsville, Texas. Angered that the town's white-owned saloons either refused to serve blacks or forced them to drink in back rooms, ten or twenty of the soldiers had shot and killed a bartender and wounded a police lieutenant. The raid was, Roosevelt fumed, "unparalleled for infamy in the annals of the United States Army"; the guilty soldiers were "bloody butchers" who should have been hanged. "If the colored men elect to stand by criminals of their own race because they are of their own race," the President warned, "they assuredly lay up for themselves the most dreadful day of reckoning." It was a sorry performance. The administration eventually agreed to let the soldiers appeal to an army panel for the right to reenlist—but only fourteen of them made it back into the service. Roosevelt left the whole matter out of his memoirs, as well he might have.²³

Roosevelt's successors did not do much more for African-Americans. President William Howard Taft sought the support of white Southern Republicans and made clear he would not interfere with the region's social

arrangements. Woodrow Wilson, a son of Virginia elected to the White House in large part by the votes of white Southerners, did more than tolerate segregation. As President, he allowed a number of federal departments to segregate their black employees in Washington and demote or fire black federal workers in the South. In an angry White House encounter with the black leader William Monroe Trotter in 1914, Wilson finally admitted what was obvious: that he believed segregation was the best policy for African-Americans.²⁴

A few progressives knew better. More than almost any other reformer, Jane Addams managed to get past racist culture and acknowledge the shame of "separate but equal." Contradicting the cherished creed of Edgar Gardner Murphy and other progressives, Jane Addams wrote in 1911 that segregation made it harder, not easier, to improve the welfare of African-Americans. The creation of "a colony of colored people" in large cities, Addams insisted, broke down the black family and weakened its ability to bring up its children amid urban temptation. The leader of Hull-House worked with national black leaders, but Hull-House did not, as her friend and associate Louise de Koven Bowen conceded, make much of an effort to cross racial boundaries and promote association among different races. Addams raised funds for the Frederick Douglass Center, one of the very few settlements serving both blacks and whites. But African-Americans, Bowen noted, "were not always welcomed warmly" at Hull-House. Years later, Addams herself summed up the progressives' failure—with a persisting, telling note of condescension. Despite the predicament of African-Americans, she admitted in 1930, "we are no longer stirred as the Abolitionists were, to remove fetters, to prevent cruelty, to lead the humblest to the banquet of civilization."²⁵

In these circumstances, "the humblest" had only a few, difficult alternatives: accommodate segregation; resist; or leave the country. Some African-Americans were indeed interested in going. Robert Charles belonged to the International Migration Society, which pledged to get African-Americans to Liberia. He was also a follower of Henry M. Turner, bishop of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who called on blacks to go back to Africa. But Charles did not leave America; instead, he stood his ground and fought. Then and afterward, many blacks, workers in particular, admired his resistance and embroidered his story. "[T]here never has been anything authentic that Robert Charles was captured," the pioneering New Orleans jazz pianist,

composer, and bandleader Jelly Roll Morton insisted years later. Blacks even made up a song about Charles. But they also understood what it meant to make his choice, to risk white violence. "I once knew the Robert Charles song," Jelly Roll Morton admitted, "but I found out it was best for me to forget it and that I did in order to go along with the world on the peaceful side. . . . [I]t was a trouble breeder."²⁶

In the short run, at least, the choice for most African-Americans was to accommodate segregation, much as earlier generations had accommodated slavery. Like the slaves, twentieth-century blacks had to learn to live a double life. Inwardly, they did not have to believe in white supremacy and black inferiority, but outwardly, they had to offer deference and submissiveness. For safety's sake, this feat of self-control had to be mastered early in life.²⁷

Benjamin Mays, born on a farm ten miles outside the town of Ninety Six in Greenwood County, South Carolina, in 1894 or 1895, was the child of former slaves. His first memory was of the mob of white men on horseback who "cursed my father, drew their guns and made him salute, made him take off his hat and bow down to them several times." Young Benjamin saw bloodhounds hunting a black man; he watched a black man, on the run from whites, hide in a swamp. In the process, Benjamin began to understand the arbitrary nature of white power. "Negroes always got the worst of it," Mays remembered. "Guilt and innocence were meaningless words: the Negro was always blamed, always punished." Mays also began to understand the limited scope of black power. "Among themselves, Negroes talked much about these tragedies," he noted. "They were impotent to do anything about them." Benjamin saw what happened to blacks who talked back to whites or, worse, struck back at them. And so, as a child, he learned mutualistic lessons similar to those learned by Hamlin Garland on the farm and Rahel Golub in the tenement and the sweatshop; but he focused more on some very different lessons: not to talk about racial matters, not to get too close to white women, not even to mention the black boxer Jack Johnson, who whipped a white man to win the heavyweight championship in 1908. "In this perilous world," Mays observed, "if a black boy wanted to live a halfway normal life and die a natural death he had to learn early the art of how to get along with white folks. . . . [I]t behooved Negroes to be humble, meek, and subservient in the presence of white folks." Even that might not be enough: "No matter how they acted, it was not always possible for Negroes to 'stay out of trou-

ble'; the many who cringed and kowtowed to white people the most were in just as much danger as the few who did not. How could a Negro avoid trouble when his 'place' was whatever any white man's whim dictated at any given time?" Benjamin recognized the toll that this life took on his people. "It certainly 'put the rabbit' in many Negroes," he wrote. "Negroes lived under constant pressures and tensions all the time in my community. . . . To be at ease, to be relaxed, to be free were luxuries unknown to Negroes in Greenwood County and in most sections of the South." Some frustrated African-Americans fought among themselves. "It was difficult," Mays concluded, "virtually impossible, to combine manhood and blackness under one skin in the days of my youth."²⁸

The principles that Benjamin Mays learned as a boy guided some black leaders as well. At the turn of the century, prominent African-Americans, North and South, pursued a strategy of accommodation. The most famous of them was Booker T. Washington, a slave at his birth in Virginia in the 1850s, founder of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute for blacks in the 1880s, and adviser to Republican politicians and Northern philanthropists by the 1890s. In a speech at the Atlanta Cotton States and International Exposition in 1895, Washington offered what became known as the "Atlanta Compromise." With an eye on moderate whites, Washington urged blacks to accept segregation and disfranchisement and concentrate instead on economic progress through self-help, thrift, and hard work. "In the long run it is the race or individual that exercised the most patience, forbearance, and self-control in the midst of trying conditions that wins . . . the respect of the world," he insisted. "An inch of progress is worth more than a yard of complaint." To make that progress, Washington favored the kind of industrial education offered at the Tuskegee Institute rather than higher education in the liberal arts. A politician at heart, Washington knew how to say different things to different people: whites could hear the promise of acquiescence; blacks, the promise of upward mobility and eventual equality. "It is not within the province of human nature," Washington declared, "that the man who is intelligent and virtuous, and owns and cultivates the best farm in his county, shall very long be denied the proper respect and consideration." Washington's optimism—"look always upon the bright side of life," he would say—must have been hard to take sometimes. But he also offered a vision of black solidarity, strength, and separateness: "We are a nation within

a nation." And Washington himself lived the double life. Privately, he pushed a more assertive policy. At various times, he worked behind the scenes to limit disfranchisement legislation and Jim Crow practices on the railroads. Yet, outwardly, like young Benjamin Mays, he preached accommodation.²⁹

At the beginning of the new century, Booker T. Washington had many willing listeners. The black middle class—African-Americans who had some property and income and hoped for more—generally accepted his strategy. Many working-class blacks, at least in the South, probably did too. But there were already signs that some African-Americans disliked so much accommodation. Beginning in the late 1890s, blacks in many Southern communities refused to ride on segregated streetcars. By shaming the streetcar owners and hurting their profits, these black boycotters hoped to end one element of Jim Crow in the South. The boycott movement peaked from 1900 to 1906, with actions in more than twenty-five Southern cities, but the results were disappointing. The loss of black riders was not enough to make whites give up Jim Crow on the cars.³⁰

During these years, Booker T. Washington also began to face direct challenges to his leadership. Prominent African-Americans resented Washington's influence over black educational institutions and newspapers and his ties to white philanthropists and politicians. Some blacks believed that Washington's strategy of accommodation was shameful. William Monroe Trotter, the Harvard-educated editor of the African-American paper the *Boston Guardian*, labeled Washington a "self-seeker" and a "coward." Other blacks questioned Washington's fundamental strategic choice to emphasize economic development and acquiesce in disfranchisement.³¹

The strongest, most comprehensive challenge to Washington came from W. E. B. Du Bois, a professor at Atlanta University. Brought up in western Massachusetts, educated at Fisk, Harvard, and Berlin in the 1890s, Du Bois was already, in his thirties, a powerful intellectual and an accomplished sociologist. Once essentially a follower of Washington, Du Bois had come to question the trade-offs of the "Atlanta Compromise." That became quite clear in 1903 when Du Bois published *The Souls of Black Folk*, complete with an essay criticizing Washington for advocating "submission." Du Bois feared that economic progress would be impossible unless blacks had political rights. Emphasizing the importance of educated blacks, the "talented tenth," for the progress of the race, Du Bois also rejected Washington's focus on

industrial rather than higher education. Joining the Socialist Party in 1904, Du Bois seemed willing to range far beyond Washington's conventional Republicanism and individualism.

Du Bois offered more than a rejoinder to Washington. In his work, Du Bois explored the duality of African-American identity: "One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder." Du Bois envisioned a pluralist America, one in which blacks could be themselves rather than appear as whites wanted them to appear. The nation had to be black as well as white. "He would not bleach his Negro soul in a flood of white Americanism, for he knows that Negro blood has a message for the world," Du Bois wrote. "He simply wishes to make it possible for a man to be both a Negro and an American, without being cursed and spit upon by his fellows, without having the doors of opportunity closed roughly in his face."³²

To help create a pluralist America, Du Bois arranged for a small meeting on the Canadian side of Niagara Falls in July 1905. What came to be known as the Niagara Movement firmly rejected accommodation of Southern whites, protested disfranchisement, praised collegiate as well as industrial education, and demanded protest as well as economic self-help. "We do not hesitate to complain," the meeting declared, "and to complain loudly and insistently." By 1909, the Niagara Movement had helped give rise to a new organization that became the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People a year later. The association included white supporters and benefactors—Lillian Wald and William English Walling, for instance—as well as African-Americans. Du Bois became its director of publicity and research and began to edit its journal, aptly named *The Crisis*.³³

There were other African-American protests, including a passionate campaign against lynching. Georgia African-Americans held an Equal Rights Convention at Macon in 1906. "We must encourage Negro businessmen," the convention's president, William Jefferson White, declared. "And at the same time we must agitate, complain, protest, and keep protesting against the invasion of our manhood rights . . . and above all organize these million brothers of ours into one great fist which shall never cease to pound at the gates of opportunity until they shall fly open." Bishop Henry M. Turner was still bolder. "To the Negro in the country the American flag is a

dirty and contemptible rag . . ." he declaimed. "I wish to say that hell is an improvement upon the United States when the Negro is involved." Few African-Americans were ready to go that far. Many may have liked what Du Bois had to say—but they also heeded Washington's message. North and South, the realities of white power tempered black emotion. The streetcar boycotts faded away; the NAACP struggled. A true African-American mass movement against segregation was a long way off.³⁴

The differences between Du Bois and Washington are obvious, and often remarked. The ideas they shared, including an uneven relationship to progressivism, are less plain but nonetheless revealing about the prospects for a "middle-class paradise" in America. Du Bois and Washington, along with other black middle-class leaders, shared the often condescending attitude of white progressives toward a working class supposedly in need of improvement. The African-American elite spoke of "uplifting the race." To achieve that goal, they emphasized the same kind of programs, especially educational and recreational reform, that progressivism emphasized. And they employed the same kinds of organization: women's clubs, religious groups, and such settlements as the Robert Gould Shaw House in Boston, the Lincoln House in Manhattan, the Neighborhood Union in Atlanta, Locust Street Settlement in Hampton, Virginia, Flanner House in Indianapolis, and Plymouth Settlement House in Louisville. As in progressivism, women played a prominent role. With black men cut off from the ballot and political participation, black women artfully capitalized on male deference to their roles as mothers and guardians of the home in order to press the African-American cause. It was, for instance, women such as Mary Church Terrell and the outspoken journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett who led the black protest against lynching.³⁵

Still, the necessities of life in Greenwood County and New Orleans, in San Juan Hill and the Tenderloin, also moved African-American activism away from progressivism. Unlike Edward Bellamy and so many other white progressives, black Americans had little reason to place their faith in state power and little to reason to believe they could gain it. Skepticism about the state in turn helps explain African-Americans' rather Victorian emphasis on self-help and self-development. At a time when the white middle class stressed the importance of association, of the individual's adjustment to the group, the black middle class necessarily invoked a more old-fashioned indi-

vidualism of "patience, forbearance, and self-control." And finally, at a time when white progressives stressed social unity, and worked to make social groups more alike, African-Americans were determined to maintain their sense of difference in the United States. Whether it was Du Bois writing of black "twoness" or Washington talking of "a nation within a nation," African-American activism, for all its similarities to progressivism, also pointed away from white reform and its notion of human identity.

African-Americans had good reason to chart an independent course from progressivism. Segregation, the progressive solution, not only exacted a heavy toll from blacks in lost freedom, power, and opportunity; Jim Crow did not even make the United States a safe place. Across the country, the lynching of blacks actually increased from fifty-seven in 1905 to eighty-nine in 1908. Atlanta saw four days of white mob violence in September 1906, inspired by the usual rumors of black attacks on white women. Black Atlantans fled the city's center in terror; the rioting spread even into the black middle-class section of Brownsville, home of W. E. B. Du Bois. Perhaps twenty-five black people, as well as one white, died. During the Roosevelt administration, racial violence struck the North as well. Evansville, Indiana, was the site of rioting in 1903. In August 1908, there was a riot in Springfield, Illinois, the home of Abraham Lincoln. Two blacks and four whites died; the homes of blacks were burned. "Lincoln freed you," white rioters shouted, "now we'll show you where you belong!" "[The] conditions in Springfield are not peculiar to that city," a reporter wrote. "Almost every community in the country is face to face with the same possibilities. A mob may form in an hour." Despite segregation, it seemed, differences between black and white might not be safely contained after all.³⁶



Differences between red and white were much easier to manage. At the start of the twentieth century, Native Americans posed little threat to whites. Far less numerous than African-Americans, the Indians seemed to be declining. Federal census takers enumerated 248,253 Native Americans in 1890; ten years later, even though the Indian Wars had come to an end in 1891, the census counted only 237,196. The Indians were more diverse and more fragmented than the African-American population. At least 170 tribal groups were spread across the country, from the Penobscot and Passamaquoddy in Maine to the

Seminoles in Florida to the Luisenos and Cahuillas in Southern California to the Makahs and Puyallups in Washington. The largest numbers of Native Americans lived in the states and territories west of the Mississippi River. More than 64,000 lived in Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory, which would be joined to form the state of Oklahoma in 1907. Given these numbers, Indians did not pose the sort of social, economic, and political challenge that whites felt from blacks. And Native Americans had seemingly been put in their "place" even more decisively than African-Americans had been put in theirs during the Redemption. Defeated in the Indian Wars, largely confined to reservations, and denied citizenship rights, the Indians were effectively excluded from the mainstream of white America.³⁷

Nevertheless, Native Americans had become a problem by the turn of the century. Their "place" had become uncertain, not because of their actions but because of the machinations of whites. The Native Americans had one resource that white society did covet—land. Throughout the late nineteenth century, whites wanted further access to the lands controlled by the tribes. At the same time, other whites, mainly the sort of genteel New England Republicans who had once backed Reconstruction, wanted to draw Native Americans into white society. The confluence of these desires was the federal policy of assimilation, which emerged in the 1870s and 1880s, and which received its fullest legislative expression in the Dawes Severalty Act of 1887. The white assimilationists intended to dismantle Native American culture, dissolve the tribes, and educate Native American children in schools—all to turn the Indians into individualistic, hard-working citizens of the United States. The Dawes Act, also known as the General Allotment Act, served this goal by providing for the gradual distribution of collectively held tribal lands to individual Native Americans—and to whites. Given the motives of its white supporters, this was at once a cynical and an optimistic policy: Indians would be exploited, but they would be transformed. It also underscored the exceptional status of Native Americans in the United States. At a time when workers, immigrants, and blacks were suspect, when boundaries were being drawn across America, the line between Indians and whites would be obliterated.

Assimilation had disappointed its advocates by 1900. For land-hungry whites, the implementation of the Dawes Act was too slow; they wanted quicker access to Indian land. For whites sympathetic to Native Americans,

assimilation did not seem to be working; it even appeared to be hurting the Indians. Of some three thousand Cheyenne and Arapaho on allotted lands in western Oklahoma, less than 20 percent were raising their own crops in 1900. The rest depended on food rations handed out by the federal Indian agent. Between rations, the agent reported, "gaunt hunger stalks them. . . ." The allotment of land at the Fort Hall Reservation in Idaho, progressive journalist Ray Stannard Baker noted in 1903, had left the Indians there "exactly as before, looking on imperturbably, eating, sleeping, idling, with no more thought of the future than a white man's child."³⁸

Whites were also having second thoughts about obliterating Native American culture. With the frontier apparently gone, the Indians now seemed like artifacts of a vanished, romantic past. Perhaps those artifacts should be preserved. Finally, the development of racial thought raised questions about assimilation. Some science suggested that racial differences were substantial and hard to overcome. Even neo-Lamarckians, who believed that environment and culture could affect racial characteristics, doubted that Indians could change very much. Influenced by Darwinism, some observers suggested that Native Americans, although perhaps superior to blacks, faced a bleak future in the struggle for survival. After "a hundred years of vain struggle ending with the pathetic present," predicted William Henry Holmes, head of the Bureau of American Ethnology, early in the new century, the Indians were "fading out to total oblivion in the very near future. All that will remain to the world of the fated race will be a few decaying monuments, the minor relics preserved in museums, and something of what has been written."³⁹

All these developments produced a new view of assimilation, especially among whites who cared deeply about Native Americans. If the Indians could not change, if their survival was in doubt, then perhaps full assimilation into the white world was a mistake. It might be better to keep them separate—not wholly excluded, as in the years before the Dawes Act, but still separate. The increasingly urbanized and bourgeois Hamlin Garland, captivated by Native American life, exemplified the new thinking. Between 1895 and 1900, the writer made five trips to visit reservations from Oklahoma and the Dakotas west to Arizona and Washington. Inspired by these trips, Garland wrote romantic short stories, novels, and essays centered on Native Americans and the old West. Saddened and angered by the Indians' condition, Garland also became a vocal critic of the assimilation policy. "The

allotment of lands in severalty," he wrote in a magazine article in 1902, "which began in land-lust and is being carried to the bitter end by those who believe a Stone Age man can be developed into a citizen of the United States in a single generation, is in violent antagonism to every wish and innate desire of the red man, and has failed of expected results. . . ." In a telling measure of his conversion to middle-class progressive culture, Garland deplored the attempt to turn the Native American into an individualist making his or her way in the world like a Victorian son out to earn his fortune. Individualism, Garland believed, was antithetical to the Native American's way of life. "All his duties—even his hunting—have always been performed in company with his fellows," Garland noted. "He is a villager, never a solitary. He dreads solitude. . . . Naturally, those who were resolute to make the Indian a solitary took little thought of this deep-seated mental characteristic, being confident that resolute whacking would jar his brain-cells into conformity with those of a white man of the same age."

The "resolute whacking" could not go on. "As a nation, we can't afford to rest under the stigma of inhuman cruelty," Garland insisted. "These red men are on our conscience." Since they were "like children," he reasoned, "We are answerable for them, just as we are answerable for the black man's future." Garland's solution was to keep Indians away from whites. In most cases, he wanted to maintain Native Americans on the reservation, the "isle of safety." Native Americans who had already received allotments should be allowed to pool their lands together to form villages away from white settlements. Of course, there could be no intermarriage of white and red. In this way, Native Americans would be preserved. With his paternal concern for the childlike race, with his fear for the good name of whites, Garland sounded like Edgar Gardner Murphy and the white progressives who advocated Jim Crow. And like many Southerners, he saw the triumph of an enlightened segregation as proof of white supremacy. "[Only] when we give our best to these red brethren of ours," Garland maintained, "do we justify ourselves as the dominant race of the Western continent."⁴⁰

Garland's voice was heard in the White House. He became one of the members of the "Cowboy Cabinet," the progressive white men from the West and Midwest whom Theodore Roosevelt consulted when he made Indian policy for his administration. The President had calmed down since his younger days in the 1880s, when he had declared, "I don't go so far as to think

that the only good Indians are dead Indians, but I believe nine out of every ten are, and I shouldn't like to inquire too closely into the case of the tenth. Now, he too was nostalgic about the passing of the frontier and the old Indian cultures. With his racial views, he too was dubious about the prospects for assimilation. To be sure, Roosevelt believed that Indians, like blacks, had some respectable individual representatives. Similarly, some tribes such as the Cherokee, were better than others. And naturally, the combative Roosevelt admired Indians for being such good fighters. He even believed that Indians, unlike blacks, should be allowed to marry whites. But the great majority of Native Americans had, he knew, only limited prospects. "A few Indians may be able to turn themselves into ordinary citizens in a dozen years," Roosevelt said after leaving the presidency. "Give to these exceptional Indians every chance; but remember that the majority must change gradually, and that it will take generations to make the change complete. . . . Some Indians can hardly be moved forward at all."⁴¹

Accordingly, Roosevelt wanted to modify the federal government's commitment to assimilation along typically progressive lines. "In dealing with the Indians our aim should be their ultimate absorption into the body of our people," he wrote carefully in his annual message to Congress in 1902. "But in many cases this absorption must and should be very slow." Roosevelt wanted the federal government to become less involved in Indians' lives. As was the case with Jim Crow in the South, he believed local whites should have more of a say in determining relations with the other race. Allotment of Indian lands would continue—but assimilation would be slow indeed.⁴²

Roosevelt's Indian policy took its clearest form with his appointment of Francis Leupp as commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1905. A graduate of Williams College, a journalist, and an advocate of civil service reform, Leupp was Roosevelt's kind of man. "The commonest mistake made . . . in dealing with the Indian," Leupp declared, "is the assumption that he is simply a white man with red skin." Whites should not imagine that education, individual landholdings, and citizenship would make Native Americans into whites. The aim of federal Indian policy, therefore, should be "improvement, not transformation." Under Leupp, the Bureau of Indian Affairs changed the education of Native American children. Like blacks in the South, Indian pupils supposedly did not need higher learning so much as practical preparation for low-skilled jobs. Deemphasizing the ambitious

boarding schools that took young Indians away from reservations, the bureau instead stressed vocational training on the reservations. Leupp also weakened the bureau's policy of placing Native American children in white public schools. During Leupp's tenure in office, the public schools got away with rejecting Indians or putting them in segregated classrooms.⁴³

As to citizenship rights for Native Americans, one of the fundamental aims of the assimilationists, Leupp was blunt. "Citizenship has been a disadvantage to many Indians," he announced. "They are not fitted for its duties or able to take advantage of its benefits." Under the Dawes Act, citizenship went automatically to Native Americans receiving an individual allotment of tribal land. But in 1906 the Roosevelt administration secured passage of the Burke Act, which broke the automatic linkage between allotment and citizenship. Now an Indian receiving allotted lands could not become a citizen of the United States for twenty-five years or until determined competent by the secretary of the interior. Since so few Native Americans were citizens, it was hardly necessary to disfranchise them. Still, a string of court decisions and state laws made Indian voting unlikely. In some places, for instance, Native Americans had to prove they were assimilated in order to cast a ballot. The notable exception would prove to be the state of Oklahoma, where Indians were both numerous and, ironically, willing to join whites in the disfranchisement of blacks. But most Native Americans, like most African-Americans, had no access to political power. At best, the Indians were wards of the federal government, dependent on Leupp, Roosevelt, and Congress.⁴⁴

It was a dangerous dependency. Under pressure from white Westerners, the federal government opened up more tribal lands to white exploitation and made it easier for Indians to sell their allotments to whites. The Supreme Court, with its ruling in *Lone Wolf v. Hitchcock* in 1903, signaled its approval. So the Roosevelt administration allotted the Rosebud Sioux, Uintah, Crow, Flathead, and Wind River Reservations to Native Americans, with the surplus available to whites. Under Leupp, the land cessions continued. Western whites called for this or that reservation to be opened up and Congress would oblige. The Burke Act, by slowing Indian citizenship, made it even easier. In May 1908 alone, 2.9 million acres of the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Reservations were opened up. All told, many millions of acres passed out of Indian hands during the Roosevelt administration.

There was little that Native Americans could do about federal policy.

Few in number, scattered across the country, the Indians lacked even the limited resources of blacks: a fairly significant middle class, a cadre of educators and officeholders, and metropolitan newspapers. And over the years, the Indians had been far more savagely subdued. Still, Native Americans resisted the authority of the federal agents where they could.

Roosevelt and Leupp would have none of that. If Native Americans would not willingly accept federal policy, if there was a conflict between red and white, then the government would end it by force and coercion. During Roosevelt's administration, there were numerous illegal arrests of Indians. A notable instance involved the Aneth Navajo of southern Utah, who had managed to avoid the reservation and government schooling. But in 1903 the Bureau of Indian Affairs set up a new agency at Shiprock, New Mexico, forty miles from Aneth. The agent, William T. Shelton, wanted Navajo children to attend the government boarding school at Shiprock. The Aneth headman, Bai-a-lil-le, and a group of followers would not send their children to the boarding school; Bai-a-lil-le, an impressive medicine man in his early forties, would not even go to Shiprock for talks in 1907. Furthermore, if Shelton was foolish enough to come to Aneth, the agent had better be "prepared to fight" because Bai-a-lil-le "wanted to fight" and "was not afraid to die." Shelton went to Aneth nevertheless. He got no fight, but no satisfaction either. Bai-a-lil-le, refusing federal authority, threatened witchcraft. By then, Francis Leupp had been drawn into the affair; in October, two troops of the Fifth Cavalry were sent to deal with the Aneth Navajo. In a surprise dawn raid on the hogans of Bai-a-lil-le and his people, the cavalry tried to make arrests and wound up killing two Navajo and wounding one. Bai-a-lil-le and nine of his followers were sent summarily to Arizona for hard labor without term. The Indian Rights Association, a group of white assimilationists, protested this draconian and illegal treatment. In reply, Leupp offered a testy and startling defense of his actions: "... there comes a time in the experience of every man who has authority when he has got to make his own laws."

Now Roosevelt had to defend his commissioner. The Navajo were, the President insisted, "a group of notorious outlaws, led by a medicine man... an Indian of the type of Geronimo in earlier days." Roosevelt, like Leupp, was impatient with the constraints of the law: "Devoutly as all of us may look forward to the day when the most backward Indian shall have been brought to the point where he can be governed just as the ignorant white

man is governed in one of our civilized communities, that day has not yet arrived." Arguing the case in court, the government even maintained that the Navajo were "prisoners of war." As with the Brownsville case, racism had led the Roosevelt government into an excess of arbitrary authority. In March 1909, the Arizona Supreme Court ordered the release of Bai-a-lil-le and his followers. There were limits to federal power, but there was still no doubt about the government's capacity to compel obedience. Bai-a-lil-le had to promise peaceful behavior and an end to witchcraft; the medicine man even went to Shiprock to speak to the Native American pupils at the government school about the importance of education.⁴⁵

As the story of Bai-a-lil-le made plain, Native Americans were not free to reject the United States. But they were not free to become full members of the nation, either. The Taft administration left things as they were; so did the Wilson administration. The Indians were caught between exclusion and integration; like African-Americans, they were segregated.⁴⁶



Far from the emptiness of southern Utah, in crowded cities, other boundary lines were being drawn between Americans. Urban residents, thrown together with strangers on city streets, felt the need for security and privacy. They wanted to know that other pedestrians would not presume to address them or bother them. Already by the late nineteenth century, one could, in effect, be alone in a crowd on the street. "The crowd is the embodiment of isolation," a European visitor to Chicago had noted in the 1870s. The urban planner Frederick Law Olmsted observed the same quality in city people: "Every day of their lives they have seen thousands of their fellow-men, have met them face to face, have brushed against them, and yet have had not experience of anything in common with them." This sense of separation was, one suspects, a particularly middle- and upper-class concern. Certainly it was the middle class that most self-consciously elaborated rules for conduct in public. A well-bred person did not stare at others. A gentleman paid attention to a lady without drawing too much attention to her—tipping his hat, speaking only if she spoke first. "All rights, and the essence of true politeness," read the book *Social Etiquette of New York*, "are contained in the homely maxim, 'MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS'; which means by a pretty evident implication, that you are to let your neighbor's business alone."⁴⁷

These rules of public behavior were not the only urban boundary lines. At the turn of the century, American cities were becoming increasingly segregated by more than race: the different classes and ethnic groups were also pulling away from each other. This residential segregation was a prosaic process, without the sad spectacle of allotment or the brazen drama of disfranchisement; rather, it was the sum of millions of individual decisions, the product of economic inequality and technological change. Well into the nineteenth century, American cities had been "walking cities," in which different social groups mixed together in neighborhoods because workers needed to live within walking distance of their jobs. By 1900, the omnibus, the street railway, the subway, and the elevated train had made it possible for many people to live some distance from work; different groups did not necessarily have to share neighborhoods. The transformation of class relations, the profound sense of difference between groups, made such separation seem desirable. The upper ten, as we have seen, lived apart in urban fortresses, exclusive suburbs, private clubs, and boarding schools. The middle class was also moving away from downtown areas to newer neighborhoods at the city's edges and to developing suburbs. But many workers, native-born and immigrant, could not afford to commute or to pay for better housing. As a result, the poorest city residents, the least skilled, the lowest paid, were becoming concentrated in their own neighborhoods. These people were not as isolated as blacks, but they were segregated nonetheless. The degree of residential segregation varied from one ethnic group to another; in general, the new immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe were more concentrated in enclaves than, say, the Germans and the Irish. And immigrants from different countries often shared neighborhoods. But by and large, New York, Chicago, Detroit, San Francisco, and other cities were becoming segregated urban worlds in which the different classes and ethnic groups were less likely to bump against one another in streets and stores and schools, and in which Rahel Golub could live for five years without "a glimpse of" America. Like Native Americans and Southern blacks, immigrants paid a political cost. Around the country, state legislatures, usually with support from progressives, deprived aliens of their longtime right to vote.⁴⁸



Even as the different boundary lines were drawn across the United States in the 1900s, Americans explored alternatives. For some people, segregation was

not enough; they wanted the complete exclusion of people different from themselves. Not content to let immigrants live apart in urban enclaves, these Americans, including some progressives, advocated immigration restriction, a wall built around the United States. And some Americans, advocates of the "science" of eugenics, advocated another kind of wall—selective breeding, which would make sure the wrong sort of people never got born in the United States in the first place.

Immigration restriction was difficult to achieve, however.⁴⁹ The United States had a long history of ambivalence toward immigrants, but it had an equally long history of their acceptance. Naturally, immigrants and their children wanted immigration to continue. So did businessmen eager for cheap and plentiful labor. Many native-born Americans had long been confident that immigrants could be assimilated into the national life. Progressive activists, excited by the power of environmental reform, tended to maintain that confidence. In 1902, Jacob Riis wondered whether the immigrants streaming through Ellis Island, the successor to Castle Garden, would become good Americans. "While the flag flies over the public school, keep it aloft over Ellis Island and have no misgivings," he told his readers. "The school has the answer to your riddle." He might have added the settlement house, the playground, the model tenement, the institutional church, and a host of other progressive devices. But many Americans' confidence in assimilation was breaking down amid the myriad social divisions of the early twentieth century. McKinley's assassin, Leon Czolgosz, was a native-born American, but his Eastern European name and anarchist views stirred fears of the new immigration. The New England patricians of the old Immigration Restriction League, among them Roosevelt's close friend Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, were active again. So were the members of the American Federation of Labor, mostly men of English, Irish, and German stock, who feared that new immigrants would break strikes and accept low wages. There was clearly no national consensus in favor of immigration restriction.⁵⁰

As a result, presidents were caught in a political tangle. Sensitive to businessmen's need for workers, Theodore Roosevelt was also concerned about social conflict in a polyglot America. Although the President had favored some sort of immigration restriction before, he clearly had to be careful now in the White House. In his first annual message to Congress at the end of

1901, Roosevelt called for new legislation. "Our present immigration laws are unsatisfactory," he wrote. "We need every honest and efficient immigrant fitted to become an American citizen, every immigrant who comes here to stay, who brings here a strong body, a stout heart, a good head, and a resolute purpose to do his duty well in every way and to bring up his children as law-abiding and God-fearing members of the community." But Roosevelt wanted "to exclude absolutely not only all persons who are known to be believers in anarchistic principles or members of anarchistic societies, but also all persons who are of a low moral tendency or of unsavory reputation." He did not endorse the favored device of the Immigration Restriction League, a literacy test for immigrants. But he did ask for "a careful and not merely perfunctory educational test" in order "to decrease the sum of ignorance, so potent in producing the envy, suspicion, malignant passion, and hatred of order, out of which anarchistic sentiment inevitably springs." Finally, bowing to organized labor, Roosevelt demanded the exclusion of "all persons . . . who are below a certain standard of economic fitness." Such a step, the President concluded, "would stop the influx of cheap labor, and the resulting competition which gives rise to so much of bitterness in American industrial life; and . . . would dry up the springs of the pestilential social conditions in our great cities. . . ."⁵¹

Despite Roosevelt's support, comprehensive immigration restriction did not come quickly or easily. The Immigration Act of 1903 gave the government the power to keep out alleged anarchists but omitted a literacy or educational test. Restrictionists made more progress when they concentrated on nonwhite immigrants. Relatively few in number, Asian immigrants were clearly vulnerable in the land of Jim Crow. In 1902, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which made Chinese immigration and citizenship difficult, was up for renewal in Congress. White Westerners had long resented the Chinese and discriminated against them. Roosevelt, looking ahead to the presidential campaign in 1904, favored the continued exclusion of Chinese of the wrong sort. The House and Senate obliged. "Congress has done its work so well," Secretary of State John Hay told Roosevelt, "that even Confucius could not become an American."⁵²

Even as Washington dealt with the Chinese, immigration from Japan became an issue. One or two thousand Japanese a year had entered the country in the 1890s. But in 1900, 12,635 migrated to the United States; by 1903, the

number jumped to 19,968. Most of the Japanese lived in California, where whites discriminated against them. Soon the state legislature was demanding Japanese exclusion. Had it been a matter only of white public opinion, the federal government would have readily obliged. But Roosevelt also had to take into account diplomatic relations with the Japanese government. Events in California soon forced his hand. In October 1906, the San Francisco School Board ordered segregation of Asian students. Responding to protests from Japan, Roosevelt sent an emissary to California to reason with San Francisco officials. When the emissary was rebuffed, Roosevelt called the action of the school board "a wicked absurdity . . . a confession of inferiority in our civilization." The President made clear his intention to protect Japanese immigrants, but that angered white Westerners and even worried white Southerners about the fate of Jim Crow. So Roosevelt shifted ground and worked out what was called the Gentlemen's Agreement with Japan. To placate the Japanese government, Roosevelt induced the San Francisco School Board to give up segregation and the California legislature to back away from anti-Japanese legislation; the price was a provision in the Immigration Act of 1907 authorizing the President to stop any immigration "to the detriment of labor conditions." Then, in 1908, after much delay, Roosevelt secured Japan's agreement to restrict migration to the United States.⁵³

During the Japanese controversy, sentiment to restrict white immigration made slow but discernible progress. One reason was the gradual spread of the newer scientific racism, which drew distinctions not only between people of different colors but between different white ethnic groups. In *The Races of Europe*, published in 1899, economist William Z. Ripley had divided whites into three groups: the tall, blond, northern Teutonic; the shorter and heavier central Alpines; and the darker southern Mediterraneans. This kind of thinking made it easier for some Americans to see Southern and Eastern European immigrants as representatives of a different and inferior race—"beaten members of beaten breeds," sociologist E. A. Ross called them. As the rise of Jim Crow, the demise of Indian assimilation, and the exclusion of the Japanese suggested, a perception of racial difference could justify all sorts of action. In 1906 and 1907, there was renewed agitation for a literacy test. The Immigration Restriction League and the American Federation of Labor favored it; so, too, did white Southerners and Westerners mindful of their own racial arrangements. Senator Furnifold M. Simmons of North Carolina brought

Southern oratory to the cause. The new immigration, he thundered, was "nothing more than the degenerate progeny of the Asiatic hordes which, long centuries ago, overran the shores of the Mediterranean . . . the spawn of the Phoenician curse." But the literacy test still had too many opponents. Roosevelt did not risk endorsing it publicly. In the end, the Immigration Act of 1907 doubled the entrance fee for immigrants from two to four dollars and set up an investigative commission on immigration. Agitation for the literacy test continued after Roosevelt left office. Still, the measure remained too controversial for any president. Taft vetoed a version of the literacy test in 1911. Wilson did the same in 1915. But the drive for immigration restriction, through the literacy test and other devices, would continue.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, some Americans advocated another kind of exclusion. In the 1900s, the nation was learning about eugenics, a so-called science born in Great Britain and inspired by new discoveries in genetics. The advocates of eugenics started with the Darwinian principle that the acquired traits of one generation were not inherited by the next. The only way, then, to improve the genetic stock of the human race was by encouraging the reproduction of people with desirable traits and discouraging the reproduction of people with undesirable traits. In urging the well-to-do to reproduce and avoid "race suicide," Theodore Roosevelt drew on a crude form of eugenics. By 1910, the former president was offering the new movement his support. But American eugenicists, led by Charles Benedict Davenport, the director of the pioneering Eugenics Record Office at Cold Spring Harbor, Long Island, focused less on encouraging the right sort of people to become parents and much more on stopping the wrong people from reproducing. In a sense, the eugenicists, with their focus on the unborn, were the ultimate exclusionists. The eugenics movement was obsessed with the danger to the American population apparently posed by the "feeble-minded" and the insane. Eugenicists campaigned particularly for state laws allowing the involuntary sterilization of the inmates of mental institutions. Indiana enacted such a law in 1907, and a number of states followed this "Indiana idea." Nationwide, some two hundred sterilizations occurred in the Progressive Era, mainly in Indiana and California.⁵⁵



By and large, the progressives did not support exclusion; it was too controversial for them to insist on the literacy test, too disturbing to contemplate

involuntary sterilization. In any event, they much preferred segregation, which proved to be easier to implement and more compatible with their faith in transforming people. Yet, the progressive support for the different forms of Jim Crow was a critical moral blunder. Segregation certainly reflected the power of progressives and other privileged whites, but it also revealed their weakness. The boundary lines of early twentieth-century America were a confession of frailty, an admission that the powerful could not create a harmonious, let alone homogeneous, nation anytime soon. Segregation was also a failure of imagination and nerve. The rise of progressivism represented a remarkable reworking of middle-class ideology, a creative deployment of a host of devices for reform, and a bold determination to take on some of the most basic and intractable issues of human existence. Willing to believe that a kind of "paradise" might really be attainable some day, progressives showed little fear in dealing with problems of gender, family, class, and economy—but not of race.

By agreeing to segregation, the progressives contradicted their own basic wisdom, their belief in the necessity of association. "It is precisely in the sundering of our society into classes, that have little in common, *that are no longer neighbors*, that our peril lives," Jacob Riis typically observed. "A people cannot work together for the good of the state if they are not on speaking terms." Instead of making African-Americans, Native Americans, and immigrants the literal and figurative neighbors of other Americans, the progressives too often worked to keep these groups apart. In the process, progressivism ensured that a greater sense of social distance would grow over time. This was true not only for Native Americans, African-American sharecroppers, and immigrant workers, who obviously began the age of segregation already some distance from middle-class culture. It was true even for the African-American elite that otherwise shared so much with the white middle class. Segregation ensured that the "talented tenth" would never feel fully comfortable with progressivism and the forms of New Deal and Great Society liberalism that succeeded it. Progressives did much to ameliorate class conflict over the course of the twentieth century; in exchange for the short-term stabilization of racial conflict in the 1900s and 1910s, they may well have made race relations worse over the long term.⁵⁶

The progressives paid a further price for segregation. In its battles with the upper ten and entrenched political power, the middle class obviously

needed allies. At their most successful, the progressives managed to promote inclusive notions, such as consumers and "the people," that could unify and mobilize diverse Americans. The crusades for segregation revealed just how pinched, narrow, and self-defeating the progressives' definition of "the people" could be. At times, progressivism seemed to be, as one historian put it, "for whites only." The progressives were all too willing to segregate the ballot box, to keep blacks, Indians, and Asians away from political opportunity. Moreover, segregation was never solely about race, important as racial identity so clearly was for progressives and other Americans. Reformers considered so many people of other races inferior because of their class status as well as their skin color: the vast majority of African-Americans in the South were problematic because they were poor, uneducated, and working-class as well as black. In fact, there was a certain racial even-handedness about some progressives' view of the lower orders. Reformers such as Edgar Gardner Murphy may not have thought much of blacks, but they did not think much of poor whites either. Murphy certainly considered African-Americans inferior to whites—but not all that inferior. "What is true . . . of the negro masses," he wrote, "is largely true of the white masses."⁵⁷

This outlook helps explain the fundamental paradox of progressive politics. To battle the rich and their political satellites, progressives rallied "the people" and supported a clutch of reforms intended to open up political participation. The initiative, referendum, and recall, the direct election of United States senators, and direct primaries were supposed to make it easier for Americans to get into politics and attack privilege. But a narrow definition of "the people" dictated antiparticipatory reforms as well. So progressives supported disfranchisement for African-Americans in the South, Native Americans in the West, and immigrants all across the country. By requiring potential voters to enroll days or even weeks before election day and to prove their identity, voter registration laws made it more time-consuming to vote. The progressives' political strength was their ability to project the "people" against the powerful; their political weakness was their willingness to segregate the ballot box and thereby keep so many Americans out of the battle against privilege.⁵⁸

More than this, the progressives' condescension toward other groups, so clearly highlighted by segregation, frittered away much of the middle-class advantage in the struggle for power in America. At a time when the upper

men were culturally isolated, in part because of progressive attacks, the middle class made its reservations about the mass of American people all too clear. Progressives often spoke of their commitment to democracy. But many reformers, so critical of individualism and individual rights, were not very democratic at all. "The idea of the liberty of the individual is not a sound basis for a democratic government," Washington Gladden insisted. The emphasis on individual rights, such as suffrage, was "a radical defect in the habitual thinking of the average American." For the Social Gospel leader, suffrage was a "duty" rather than a "right," and so presumably it could be taken away. Workers and farmers, suspicious of upper-class individualism, had good reason to wonder about the attitudes and intentions that lay behind segregation, disfranchisement, and other progressive reforms. Segregation in all its forms was convenient, but costly, for the progressives.⁵⁹

It might have been different. However convenient, segregation and disfranchisement were not foreordained. The progressives themselves advanced an alternative. Progressivism emerged in part from the desire to release middle-class women from a form of segregation. Even as the middle class accepted and urged the segregation of other races and ethnic groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was increasingly willing to break down the segregation of the sexes by allowing women to cross social boundary lines into public spaces. In the cities, department stores became a legitimate place for women. Some streets became respectable female public space, too. There was, for instance, New York City's famous Ladies' Mile, up Broadway from Fourteenth to Twenty-third Streets, where women could stroll and window-shop with no question about their morals.

At the start of the twentieth century, women also intensified their quest to cross the boundary line that separated them from the ballot box. With the vote won only in Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming, suffragists began to reconsider their traditional tactic of quietly lobbying male politicians. By 1909, the National American Woman Suffrage Association and other suffragist groups were holding public rallies. And some women, influenced by the English suffragettes, were taking to the streets to demand the vote. In October 1908, Anna Howard Shaw, president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, led a parade of the Iowa Equal Suffrage Association at Boone, Iowa. "After much urging from her and the president, and with great trepidation and many misgivings on the part of

the members, a procession was formed and marched through the principal streets," the suffrage movement's official history noted. "[It] required much courage to take part in it." Unfortunately for the country and for the progressives themselves, they did not have much more courage to spare in the age of segregation.⁶⁰

PART THREE

DISTURBANCE
AND DEFEAT