

Educator Resource

Civil War to Civil Rights: Rights

Dates & Eras Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Civil Rights

Themes Civil War to Civil Rights, Emancipation, Reconstruction, African Americans, Segregation

Grades 5–7
6–9

Standards USII.3

History Overview

In the days following emancipation, African American people began work to find their place in their new, free world. While legal chattel slavery was abolished with the 13th Amendment, there were many ways that systemic racism oppressed people of color. Written laws of segregation maintained white supremacy, not allowing African-American people to live freely. Throughout history, African-American people have actively fought to be included in United States society that promoted exceptional privileges like freedom and equality--ideals that were effectively off-limits to people of color. African American people worked to answer the questions of emancipation. What rights would freedom bring? How would they be achieved?

The 14th Amendment Grants Citizenship: 1868

African-American people were still not considered legal United States citizens until the ratification of the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. The 14th Amendment ensured that African-American people were legally recognized as citizens and promised equal protection under the law.

The 15th Amendment Gives the Vote: 1870

The 15th Amendment gave African-American men the right to vote. The Amendment was ratified in 1870 and gave Black men full privilege to vote in all elections, local, state, and national. However, some states still prevented Black men from voting by enacting poll taxes, literacy tests, and many other voter suppression methods. These voting barriers effectively prevented African-American men from voting during the Jim Crow era.

Jim Crow Separates Society: Late 1800s-Mid-1900s

The African-American fight for civil rights continued, especially as “Jim Crow” laws were put into place in the late 19th century. Among other things these laws segregated public facilities and were reinforced by the Supreme Court as long the facilities were “separate but equal.” Schools, bus stops, restrooms, and water fountains were restricted and labeled “white only” or “colored only.” The facilities were never equal; White people always had the cleaner and better-funded facilities, while Black people had less funded facilities that were often poorly maintained.

The Civil Rights Movement: 1950s-1960s

During the Civil Rights Movement, African American people advocated for total equality in politics and an end to segregation. People, both Black and White, held demonstrations and protests put on by all age groups. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 legally required all segregation in all facilities to end immediately, though the struggle would continue beyond that.

Resources

[Fred Carter on Sit Ins](#)
(audio clip)

Additional Links

[Contested Franchise](#)
[Virginia Constitution of 1868](#)
[J.W.D. Bland, Encyclopedia of Virginia](#)

Suggested Questions

1. Describe what Fred Carter is talking about in the sound clip. How does this clip fit within the larger historical context of Jim Crow and Civil Rights?
2. Explain the major points of Virginia Constitution of 1868. What similarities does the Virginia Constitution of 1868 have to the 14th and 15th Amendments?

Suggested Activities

1. Research other ways in which African American people participated in the Civil Rights Movement in Virginia. Have the students create a PowerPoint with their findings.
2. Have students write a reflection paragraph about the changes in the Virginia Constitution. How did the 1868 Constitution reshape life in Virginia? Who was affected by the new Constitution? Who was excluded?
3. Create a short biography of other three other individuals who served in the 1867-1868 Constitutional Convention in Virginia. A list of delegates can be found here and more information about the convention can be found here.