

Some colleges were established to offer higher education for African Americans. They provided opportunities for only a small percentage of people, however. In 1895, W. E. B. Du Bois became the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard.

At the dawn of the 20th century, millions were getting an education, although racial discrimination remained a thorn in the flesh of American society.

Section 3: Segregation and Discrimination

MAIN IDEA African Americans lead the fight against voting restrictions and Jim Crow laws.

By 1900, southern states restricted African Americans' right to vote, weakening their political power. One law required voters to be able to read. Another put a tax on voting. A third disallowed voters if they, their fathers, or their grandfathers could not vote before January 1, 1867—the first day that African Americans could vote. All these laws were passed specifically to take away blacks' right to vote. The Supreme Court allowed these laws to remain standing.

The southern states also passed Jim Crow laws that segregated whites and blacks into separate facilities. When Homer Plessy was denied a seat on a railroad car, he sued, but the Supreme Court ruled separate facilities legal.

Racial etiquette—customs—restricted the rights of African Americans even when laws did not. Booker T. Washington argued that blacks should not insist on full equality—which whites, he felt, would resist—but work for economic security. Ida Wells crusaded nationwide to end lynching—hanging people without trial. African Americans in the North faced discrimination as well.

Mexican Americans, especially in the Southwest, faced similar discrimination. The railroads hired them to build new lines but paid little. Landowners forced workers to