

African Americans

History & Politics 1865-2000

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Constitutional Amendments 1865

- 13th: abolishes slavery “except as punishment for a crime”
- 14th: all persons born or naturalized in the US have rights of citizenship regardless of race, religion, national origin, or previous condition of servitude
- 15th: right of men to vote regardless of race etc.

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Race, Gender and 14th & 15th Amendments

- Battles over the 15th amendment split women’s rights and Blacks’ rights advocates
- 14th and 15th amendments do not apply to non-White immigrants because they are not allowed to become naturalized
 - but do apply to non-Whites born in the US
 - this becomes an important part of Asian American politics

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1865-1876 Reconstruction

- Union army occupies the south.
- Blacks vote. Whites who have been in Rebel army cannot. Black elected officials.
- Some reforms. Some improvement for Blacks. Some land reform (has future effects)
- Much turmoil, resistance. Attempts by Whites to re-create racial domination
- Conflicts around 15th amendment disrupt the previous coalition between feminists and supporters of African-American rights.

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Blacks/ African Americans: The White Counter-Revolution

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The End of Reconstruction

- Compromise of 1876 ends Reconstruction to break election deadlock, elect Hayes.
- Union army leaves the south, agreement to let southerners do what they will about race. White southerners can vote again.
- “Healing” White nation by sacrificing Blacks
- Denials that the war was about slavery
- [Later, Confederate soldiers are even made eligible for US veterans’ pensions with the same standing as Union soldiers]

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1877 - 1920 Era of Explicit Racism

- Slavery was over, but a new racial order was created
- It was created by using proxies for race, circumventing the strictures of the 14th amendment
- Origins teach you how a system was built, once in place hard to see why things are as they are

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1870s-1890s

- 90% of all Blacks live in rural areas, 90% in south
 - most in cotton farming, dependent on landowners, subject to violent repression.
- Lynchings and KKK terrorism increase
 - KKK = local White authorities in sheets
- Blacks demand reparations for slavery immediately after the war. (Whites ignore.)
- Some emigrationism, 500+ actually emigrate to Liberia. Most want to stay.

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Creating the New Racial Order

- 1880s - 1890s Southern states pass Jim Crow segregation laws.
- 1893 Plessey vs Furgeson, "Separate but Equal," US Supreme Court effectively guts the 14th amendment.
- Failure of land reform. White elites reconsolidate class privilege

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Politics & Race

- Democratic Party = alliance of southern White planters and northern industrialists and working class.
- Republican Party anti-slavery in 1850s (Lincoln).
 - 1876-1891 debate whether to support Black rights
 - after 1891 abandon Black rights entirely
- Populist movement threatens trans-racial alliance among southern working class
 - elite Whites work to disenfranchise Blacks (and working class) to eliminate threat.

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Black Disenfranchisement

- No disguise, overt White efforts to disenfranchise Blacks, but accomplish racial goals without explicitly using race (which is illegal)
- Example: Louisiana, 130,344 Blacks registered in 1895, after constitution rewritten, only 5,000 in 1898 and 1,772 in 1916.
- Poll taxes, literacy requirements, personal and periodic registration at difficult-to-reach places, White primaries. "Grandfather clause" protects Whites.
- Blacks lose all political power.
- Same tools in the north disenfranchise White workers especially immigrants.

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1895-1920 Virulent Racism

- Presidents Taft and Wilson are explicit racists
- US Supreme Court guts the 14th amendment
- Hundreds of African Americans are lynched (murdered) in the south.
- "Scientific racism" is taught in college science classrooms. This ideology distinguishes northern Aryan from southern Europeans, as well as what we now understand as "races."
- Explicit opposition to any form of mixing of "races." Intermarriage illegal. Includes Asians

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Black Resistance 1880-1920

- There is resistance to Jim Crow.
- Bus boycotts & consumer boycotts against segregation in the cities.
- Petitions, speeches. Rhetoric of citizenship, equality.
- Northern, educated Blacks speak out for equality, citizenship. But lose 1880-1920

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Counter-Trends

- Pockets of Black development
- Black migration (cowboys; movements into cities)
- Black schools, colleges
- Black political movements
- Too weak in this era to win, but set up the future (we will return to these)

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Insert Strategies of Resistance Here

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20th Century African American History

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Historical Overview

- 1880-1920 Racism strong, Blacks lose
- 1920-1954 Moderate progress for Blacks
- 1954 – 1965 Civil Rights Era “The Second American Revolution.”
- 1965-1980 Consolidation of Black gains, battles over implementation + “White backlash”
- 1980s-2000. Black political influence erodes. Improvement for Black middle class + decline for Black lower class.

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1910s-1920s

- 1916-1925 Marcus Garvey. Back to Africa. Militant separatist, Black capitalist. Black religious icons.
- 1919 Bloody race riots in many cities, Whites attacking and killing Blacks.
- 1920s NAACP under James Weldon Johnson begins the concerted campaign of lawsuits to chip away at segregation,
 - begin the path towards Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka (1954).
 - Early victories provide resources that increase Black education.

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1920s-1930s

- 1920s - 1940s. **A. Philip Randolph. Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Strong Black union, political platform.**
- 1920s - 1930s Blacks shift voting patterns, become potential swing voters.
 - From “knee-jerk Republicans” (holdover from 19th century, Republicans anti-slavery, Lincoln freed the slaves) to willing to vote for whomever supports them and their issues.
- 1936 Blacks play a key role in Roosevelt’s New Deal Coalition. Become significant political players.

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1940-1960

- 1941 threatened March on Washington, led by Randolph. Called off when FDR agrees to ban racial discrimination in war industries.
- 1942-1945 World War II. Political watershed
- 1945-1960. Post-war politics. Communism and anti-Communism. “Hearts and Minds” Anti-colonialism, independence for African nations. US racial policies become international embarrassment.

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What Changed between 1880 and 1960?

Major source:

Doug McAdam. Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency. University of Chicago Press, 1982.

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The Great Migration: Rural South to Urban North & South

- 1890 Blacks are 90% rural, 90% southern. No political leverage. Economically dependent. Illiterate. Threat of numbers in southern areas leads to extreme measures to keep them suppressed.
- Between 1900 and 1960 Blacks Move:
 - South to North. From 90% southern in 1900 to 60% in 1960.
 - Rural to Urban. Southern Blacks: from 9% urban in 1890 and 34% in 1930 to 58% in 1960. The 40% of Blacks in the north are virtually all urban.

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Consequences of Urbanization

- Voting in North. Swing votes, parts of political machines. Black Congressmen.
- Less daily domination. More able to gather without White oversight. Positive consequence of physical segregation.
- Able to support independent Black professionals (ministers, morticians, barbers & hairdressers).
 - Economic independence=political independence.
- Rising education, income, political awareness
- Black newspapers, magazines, news sources.

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Organizational Infrastructure Grows

- Black Churches. Larger, can support full-time ministers. Autonomous, Blacks control.
 - Social gospel movement = role of church in society.
- Black Colleges. Lawsuits force the equal part of separate but equal. Obtain White money. Massive growth in educated youth. Students economically independent of Whites
- NAACP is a White-dominated organization at the national level, but a Black grassroots organization at the local level mobilized to support & defend Blacks.

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Rising Political Influence

- 1865-1920 those Blacks who could vote were staunchly Republican (the anti-slavery party, Lincoln freed the slaves). But after 1880, Republicans do nothing for Black rights
- In 1920s, NAACP and others urge Blacks to vote for whatever party will support Black rights, proportion voting Democrat goes up
- In 1930s, Blacks are part of Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, get some benefits; Eleanor Roosevelt supports more strongly

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Rising Education

- Growth in Black education & Black colleges a direct result of NAACP litigation in the 1920s and 1930s
- Court cases forced the "equal" in "separate but equal"
- Southern states had to pay for Black education to defend segregation (but Blacks still lagged way behind Whites)
- These lawsuits also laid the groundwork for 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education

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Hope

- "Cognitive liberation" = belief that change is possible (McAdam)
- Brown vs. Board of Education in 1954: hope that change was possible, federal government would intervene.
- Blacks more positive about Whites in the Civil Rights era, believed Whites were ready to change
- Blacks more integrationist when Whites seem willing to change & are open to integration and power sharing, are more separatist when Whites are more racist and conservative

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Politics 1930-1960

- After 1930, Blacks become increasingly important "swing vote" in some northern areas, part of the New Deal coalition
- Blacks voting predominantly but not uniformly Democrat 1930-1960
- 1960 both Republicans and Democrats are backing Civil Rights AND trying to gain White southern votes.
- 1960 Close election, Kennedy vs. Nixon. Kennedy wins, Blacks seen as swing vote. Kennedy gives support to civil rights, while trying to keep White southern vote.

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The Civil Rights Era 1954-1969

Events & Themes

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1950s

- 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education. Bans segregation, but allows graduate implementation.
- 1954 Emmett Till murdered. Widespread publicity among Blacks.
- 1955-56 Montgomery Bus Boycott, rise of Martin Luther King, Jr. Nation-wide publicity.
- 1950s Malcolm X preaching on the streets of Harlem.
- 1957 Martin Luther King, Jr. founds Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

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White Resistance 1950s

- 1954-1970 (and continuing?) White resistance. Violence against Blacks, close public schools, mobilize organizations
- 1957. White riots at Little Rock High (Arkansas) to block small-scale integration. US Troops protect integration.
- 1954-1960s NAACP persecuted in south. Banned as "Communist." Teachers, others fired for being members. (Same people who were members of NAACP involved in other Black organizations, involved in Black churches.)

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The Civil Rights Advance 1960s

- 1960- Sit-ins start (SNCC = Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee)
- 1961 Freedom Rides (CORE=Congress of Racial Equality)
- 1963-65 major civil rights marches, major civil rights legislation
- 1963 March on Washington
- 1963 Kenney killed. President Johnson (a southerner) vows to be the "civil rights president."
- 1964 Public Accommodations Act

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Drama of Civil Rights

- Movement uses nonviolence, claims moral high ground
- Segregationists respond violently
- Confrontation leads to disruption
- Federal government, economic elites want peace, less committed to segregation.
- Disruption + moral high ground of non-violence leads "bystanders" to support the Black movement.
- However, many blame the movement for "causing" the violence by challenging people known to be violent

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Separatism 1960s

- Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) Elijah Muhammad.
- 1960 TV show: "The Hate that Hate Produced." Expose, controversy
- Malcolm X: most visible. Charismatic, articulate. Rejected non-violence, said Blacks should defend themselves if attacked
- Controversial among Blacks as well as Whites

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1964

- Freedom Summer. White college students go south. Civil rights workers killed.
- Battle over the Mississippi delegation to national convention. Fanny Lou Hamer "Is this America?"
- Johnson re-elected. The shift of the White racist vote to the Republican Party.
- Malcolm X travels to Mecca, embraces nonracial Islam, changes his name to El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz

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1965-6

- Watts riot 1965.
- 1963-1968 Black urban riots. Militancy. Northern/ western. Policing, poverty – not just "rights." White fears.
- 1965 Malcolm X assassinated
- 1965 Selma, the last big civil rights march. Voting Rights Act
- 1966 "Black power" Stokely Carmichael and SNCC. Marginalization of Whites in the movement. Power rhetoric frightens Whites.

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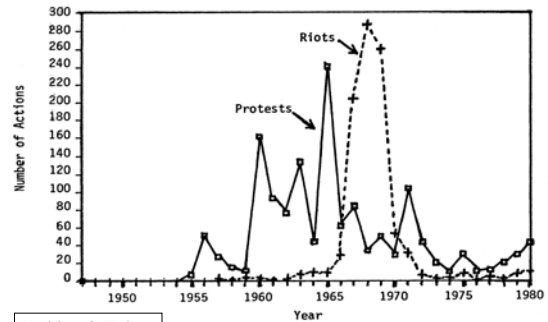
The End of the Civil Rights Era

- 1966-1967 King takes the movement north. Much less success. "Where Do We Go From Here?" Stresses need to address economic issues
- 1968 ML King assassinated. Huge wave of riots.
- 1966-1971 White students increasing involved in anti-war movement. White campus riots over the Vietnam war.
- 1969 Nixon. "Law and order." The beginning of the decline of Black political influence.

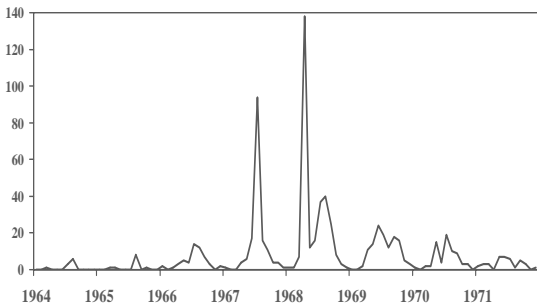
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Timing of Black Protests, Riots

Figure 5. Black Unruliness, 1955-80

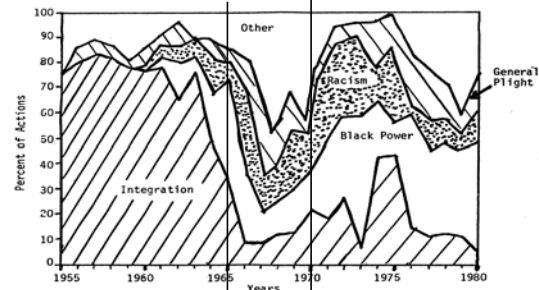


Monthly Riot Counts 1964-1971



Issues addressed by Movement

Figure 6. Major Issues in the Black Movement, 1955-80

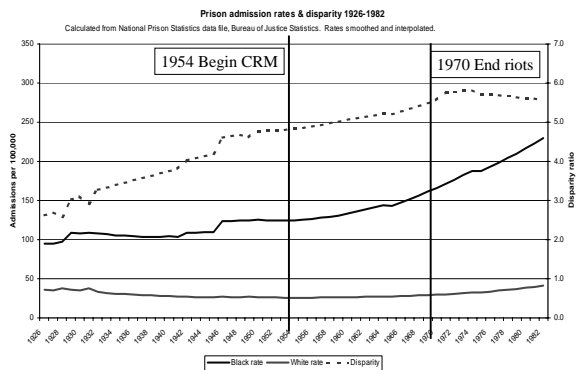


Anger and Polarization

- White segregationists resisted even moderate reforms
- Non-violence as tactic (vs religious principle for MLK)
- Growing Black activist anger at White reactions
- Segregation laws a narrow goal: cannot address the economic, political, cultural deprivation of a people
- Riots 1963-1970: Eruptions of the Black lower classes. White responsiveness + White fear
- Belief in possibility of race war by late 1960s
- Black turn to separatism, "Black power," "Black pride" magnifies themes long present in the culture
- White flight. Race-coded "law and order" & "anti-crime" rhetoric.

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Black prison admissions & disparity rise 1940-1980



Black Movement Since 1970

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Politics 1964-2000

- 1964 election pits strong Civil Rights activist LB Johnson against far right conservative Goldwater. Self-conscious racists shift to Republicans, Democrats come to be viewed as the party of Blacks & civil rights.
- 1968 – 2000 Blacks vote Democratic 95%+. Republicans ignore the Black vote, seek to shore up the White vote with “race coded” appeals. Democrats take Black vote for granted, chase White votes.

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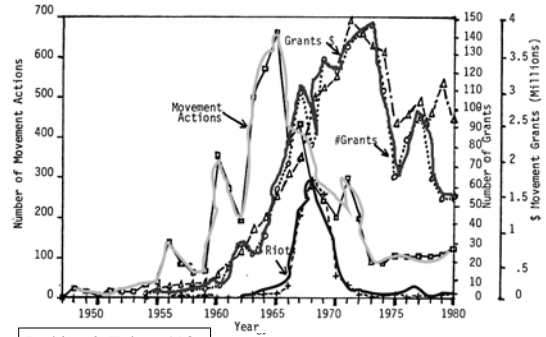
1970s Part 1

- Implementation struggles. White resistance changes form.
- Black political organizations become part of the “system.”
- Affirmative action policies are initiated
- Cultural nationalism grows: Black (Afro-American) studies departments; Kwanza invented
- Black progress: reduced poverty, increased education, increased college enrollment.

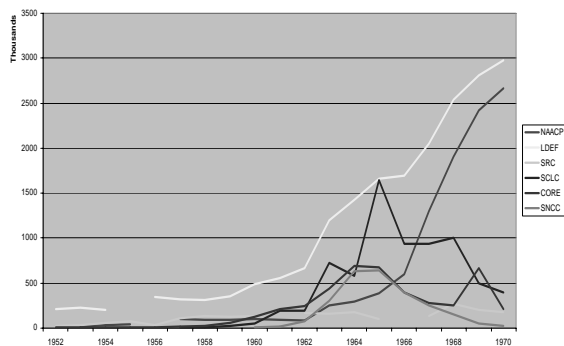
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Mobilization precedes external funding

Figure 2. Black Insurgency and Foundation Grants, 1947-80



Funding for Civil Rights Organizations (Haines)



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1970s Part 2

- Generally difficult economic times: stagflation, gas lines. Political left declines, White activists involved in environmentalism, anti-nuclear.
- “White backlash.” Anti-busing riots oppose school integration: Boston, Louisville. Rhetoric of “neighborhood schools” & racial attacks.
- “War on drugs” begins, Black imprisonment climbs.
- White working class, not Blacks, are the swing votes.
- Split in Nation of Islam 1975: most follow W. Deen Muhammad into mainstream non-racial Islam; Louis Farrakhan leads separatist splinter)

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1980s Part 1

- **Reaganism. Conservatives strike back.** Huge cuts in welfare, college scholarship programs, low-income housing, other social programs. Large tax cuts, S&L bailout create deficits.
- **The effective end of federal support for affirmative action in employment.** Whites even use MLK's equality rhetoric against Blacks.
- **Recessions.** "When White America has a cold, Black America has pneumonia." Economic disaster in segregated Black urban areas: unemployment, poverty, hunger, infant mortality, segregation, crime all rise.

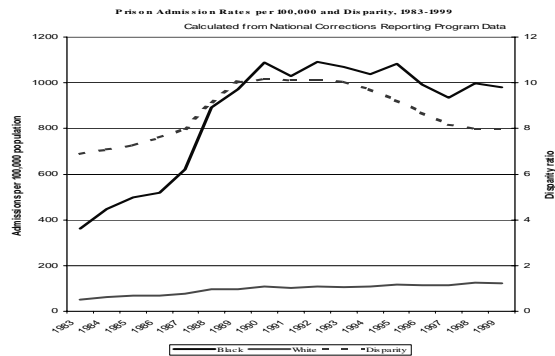
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1980s part 2

- **Black high school graduation continues to rise, but Black college enrollments drop.**
- **White flight.** Limited progress in school integration begins to reverse. By end of the decade, schools are as segregated in 1990 as in 1960. (Trend continues into the 2000s.)
- **Race coded use of crime as a political issue:** "Willie Horton" 1988.
- **Politicized "drug war"** leads to massive incarceration of African Americans.

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Black Prison admissions & disparity 1983-1999



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1990s Economics

- **Early 1990s recession followed by long period of boom.**
- **Late 1990s low unemployment, growing wealth of the top 20% (especially top 1%) of the population.**
- **Declining real incomes since the 1970s of the bottom 60%, especially the bottom 40%, with only a slight rise at the end of the decade, decline with 2000s recession.** Rise in homelessness of families, particularly of Black families.
- **Dismantling of the last vestiges of a social welfare system.** There is no "safety net" for the poor, few supports for the "working poor."
- **Growing self-segregation of the affluent: well-off people rarely even see non-affluent people.** More economic segregation than in any prior period.

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1990s Race

- **Growing Black middle class, college educated.** Largely segregated in Black middle class areas, as Whites flee even non-poor Blacks.
- **Declining economic well-being of Black lower class.**
- **Simultaneous growth of integrated, non-racist consciousness among Whites AND of renewed "respectability" of overtly racist images, jokes, language.**
- **Explicit White racist movements growing.**

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1990s Events

- **1992 Rodney King beating & trial.** Major shift in the anger of the Black middle class.
- **1992 Clinton elected.**
- **1995 Million Man March.** Louis Farrakahn and the Black masses.
- **Growing Afrocentrism, separatism among middle class Black families.** Kwanza celebrations spread. (Note: Most Blacks are Christian; Kwanza is a cultural celebration, not religious.)
- **1995 OJ Simpson trial.**
- **1995. Oklahoma City bombing by White right-wing anti-government terrorist.**

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Some Themes of the late 1990s & early 2000s

- Continuing increases in anti-crime rhetoric, building more prisons
- Declining high school graduation for Blacks after gains of the 1970s
- Growing segregation
- Lack of political unity among Black movement organizations
- Debates about affirmative action

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The 2000s

- Close election dramatizes problems of voter registration, unequal voting procedures, disenfranchisement of felons.
- WTC attack of 9/11/2001 – “war.” Implications for African Americans unclear.
- Economic downturn – consequences for African Americans?
- Attacks on Affirmative Action in college admissions (the last place where it still exists)
 - Supreme Court rules strict “formulas” cannot be used, but race may be considered qualitatively

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