

Segregation and “Jim Crow”

1. During Reconstruction African Americans began to have some power in Virginia’s government. Both blacks and whites held government positions, ate in the same restaurants, rode in the same railway cars, used the same public facilities and voted in the same elections. This would not last, however. White citizens soon became concerned because in the growing cities they did not have the same control over the freedmen as they had in the rural areas through white land ownership and sharecropping. In the cities the whites were in competition with the African Americans and there was more social mixing than ever before. Many White citizens wanted things to return to the way they had been before Reconstruction.

2. Because of the growing concerns of white citizens, the freedoms and rights promised to African Americans were slowly taken away after Reconstruction. African Americans began to experience discrimination (the unfair difference in the treatment of people). By 1901 this discrimination took the form of Jim Crow laws. These laws were passed by southern states and affected African Americans in many ways:

- Laws were passed that made it almost impossible for African Americans and poor whites to vote or hold public office.
 - All voters had to pay a poll tax of \$6.00.
 - Election officials were allowed to give voters a test that they had to pass in order to vote (Literacy Test).
- Laws were passed that created segregation (the separation of people, usually based on race or religion). African Americans were forced to use separate facilities such as drinking fountains and schools.

3. These laws angered African Americans. Many formed groups to fight against Jim Crow laws. They wrote letters, held meetings, and organized protests. These laws also caused many African Americans to work together to improve their lives and their communities. They began to start their own businesses, print their own newspapers, and train to become doctors, lawyers, and teachers so that they could better serve the needs of their segregated brothers and sisters.