

Segregated America

After the Civil War, millions of formerly enslaved African Americans hoped to join the larger society as full and equal citizens. Although some white Americans welcomed them, others used people's ignorance, racism, and self-interest to sustain and spread racial divisions. By 1900, new laws and old customs in the North and the South had created a segregated society that condemned Americans of color to second-class citizenship.

Denied public educational resources, people of color strengthened their own schools and communities and fought for the resources that had been unjustly denied to their children. Parents' demands for better schools became a crucial part of the larger struggle for civil rights.

...After the Civil War, southern states ultimately created a dual educational system based on race. These separate schools were anything but equal.

Yet, the commitment of African American teachers and parents to education never faltered. They established a tradition of educational self-help and were among the first southerners to campaign for universal public education. They welcomed the support of the Freedmen's Bureau, white charities, and missionary societies. Black communities, many desperately poor, also dug deep into their own resources to build and maintain schools that met their needs and reflected their values.

“We went every day about nine o'clock, with our books wrapped in paper to prevent the police or white persons from seeing them...After school we left the same way we entered, one by one, when we would go to the square about a block from school, and wait for each other.”

—**Susie King, who attended a secret school in Savannah, Georgia**

Source—and to learn more: National Museum of American History
<http://americanhistory.si.edu/brown/history/1-segregated/segregated-america.html>