

Racism and White Privilege

QUADRANT 3

KEY EVENTS IN THE STRUGGLE FOR RACIAL EQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES

1790: The Naturalization Act of 1790 restricts citizenship to free whites.

1819: The Civilization Act provides U.S. government funds to subsidize Protestant missionary educators to convert Native Americans to Christianity.

1840: European migration in large numbers begins from Great Britain and all parts of Europe.

1848: Chinese laborers are recruited to the West Coast to work in mining and agriculture; the laborers help build the Transcontinental Railroad.

1848: The **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo** ends the U.S.-Mexican War. Mexico cedes one-third of its territory, including the future states of California, Texas, Utah, New Mexico, Arizona, Nevada, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. The treaty promises to protect the land, language, and culture of Mexicans living in ceded territory and gives them the right to become U.S. citizens if they stay. Congress refuses to pass Article X, stipulating protection of ancestral lands, and instead requires Mexicans to prove their legitimate title to land in U.S. courts, by speaking English, with U.S. lawyers.

1855: California requires all instruction to be conducted in English.

1857: In *Dred Scott v. Sandford*, the Supreme Court concludes that black people cannot be citizens under the United States Constitution because they had “no rights which the white man was bound to respect.”

1865: Confederate veterans establish the Ku Klux Klan—the country’s first domestic terrorist group devoted to white supremacy and ending Reconstruction in the South.

1868: The 14th Amendment specifies that the status of citizenship, both state and national, is automatically conferred to all persons born or naturalized within the United States, thus making African Americans full citizens; it also prohibits states from denying equal protection or due process.

1869: Francis Galton (1822–1911) proposes the first measures to preserve or enhance biological characteristics, and later coined the term “eugenics.”

1871: The United States Congress passes the Force Bill, allowing for prosecution of Ku Klux Klan members in federal court; the bill dramatically slows Klan activity.

1870–1928: Native American children are removed from their communities by U.S. government mandate and put in boarding schools to “civilize” them.

1881: Tennessee passes the first of the “Jim Crow” laws, segregating state railroads. Other Southern states pass similar laws over the next 15 years instituting poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and literacy tests to restrict African American civil liberties and relegate African Americans to second-class citizens.

1882: The Chinese Exclusion Act prohibits Chinese immigration for 10 years, bowing to pressure from nativists on the West Coast (renewed 1892, permanent 1902, repealed 1943).

1896: In *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court declares “separate but equal” to be constitutional.

1898: The U.S. defeats Spain and acquires Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines, and annexes Hawaii.

1909: The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is founded by a multiracial group of people led by W.E. B. DuBois and involves Mary White Ovington and Ida B. Wells.

1917: The Immigration Act of 1917, also known as the Asian Barred Zone Act, imposes a literacy test and establishes an Asiatic Barred Zone restricting immigration from southern and eastern Asia and the Pacific islands, excluding the Japanese and American territories of Guam and the Philippines.

1917: The Jones Act makes Puerto Ricans U.S. citizens, eligible to serve in the military but not eligible to vote in national elections.

1922: Japanese businessman Takao Ozawa petitions the Supreme Court for naturalization, arguing that his skin is as white, if not whiter, than any so-called Caucasian; the Court rules Ozawa cannot be a citizen because he is not “white” within the meaning of the statute, asserting that the best-known science of the time defines Ozawa as of the Mongolian race.

1923: In *U.S. v. Bhagat Singh Thind*, the Supreme Court recognizes that Native Americans are “scientifically” Caucasians but concludes they are not white in popular (white) understanding, reversing the logic used in the Ozawa case.

1924: The Indian Citizenship Act grants Native Americans with U.S. Citizenship.

1924: The Immigration Act of 1924 (also known as the National Origins or Johnson-Reed Act) pegs immigration to 2% of the total of any nation’s residents in the U.S. according to the 1890 census; later quotas are based on the ethnic makeup of the U.S. population in 1920. “America must be kept American,” says President Coolidge as he signs the bill into law.

1930: Mexican parents in Texas, in *Independent School District v. Salvatierra*, prove that the school district illegally segregated their children based on race.

1935: The National Labor Relations Act (the Wagner Act) legalizes the right to organize and create unions but excludes farm workers and domestic workers, most of whom are Chicano/a, Asian, and African American.

1942: Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) signs Executive Order 9066, which orders the evacuation and mass incarceration of 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry living on the West Coast, most of whom are U.S. citizens or documented immigrants.

1943: Congress lifts the ban on Chinese immigration, and Chinese people are permitted to become naturalized citizens.

1951: Spanish is restored as a language of instruction in the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

1954: In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court unanimously rules that “separate but equal” public schools for blacks and whites are unconstitutional; it becomes a catalyst for education reform and challenging segregation in all areas of society.

1954: Operation Wetback, a project of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, removes “illegal” Mexican immigrants (“wetbacks”) from the Southwest.

1964: The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in voting, public accommodations, public facilities, public education, federally funded programs, and employment; it is considered the most significant piece of civil rights legislation since the Reconstruction.

1965: The Voting Rights Act outlaws the use of discriminatory tactics to prevent African Americans and other minorities from voting, and requires certain “covered jurisdictions”—mostly in the South—to seek approval from the Department of Justice before changing electoral procedures or district boundaries.

1965: The Immigration and Naturalization Act repeals national origins quotas, impacting peoples of Asia, Latin America, and Africa; it allows the annual admission of 170,000 from the Eastern hemisphere and 120,000 from the Western Hemisphere. Immediate family members of U.S. citizens are exempt from quotas. The act contributes to the increasing racial, ethnic, and religious diversity of the U.S.

1967: In *Loving v. Virginia*, a unanimous Supreme Court decision blocks states from passing laws that ban inter-racial marriages, ending all race-based legal restrictions on marriage in the United States.

1972: In *Lau v. Nichols*, the Supreme Court rules that school programs conducted exclusively in English deny equal access to education to students who speak other languages, and that districts have a responsibility to help students overcome a language disadvantage.

1975: The Indochina Migration and Refugee Act allows special entry into the United States of over 759,000 Vietnamese, 145,000 Cambodians, 186,300 Hmong, and 242,000 Laotians through 2002.

1982: In *Plyer v. Doe*, the Supreme Court strikes down a state statute denying funding for education to children who are undocumented immigrants.

1996: The Anti-Terrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act and Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act is passed in response to the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center and the 1995 bombing in Oklahoma City; the act authorizes the removal of immigrants from ports of entry without judicial hearings and declares undocumented migrants ineligible for public benefits.

1997: Haitian immigrant Abner Louima is beaten and sodomized with a broomstick by New York Police Department (NYPD) officers while in custody, sparking a nationwide outcry on police brutality. In 2002, a federal court overturns the conviction of the NYPD officers.

1998: California voters pass Proposition 227 (“English for the children”) banning bilingual education programs in public schools.

1998: African-American James Byrd Jr. is chained to the back of a pickup truck and dragged for three miles in a brutal murder by white supremacists in Texas; the incident leads to the passage of hate crime legislation in Texas.

1999: African-American farmers win a class action lawsuit against the U.S. Department of Agriculture for racial discrimination in the allocation of farm loans and assistance.

1999: The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reports to the President the failure of the government “to eliminate differences in health care delivery, financing and research presents a discriminatory barrier that creates and perpetuates differences in health status.”

1999: The first annual White Privilege Conference is launched by Dr. Eddie Moore Jr. at Cornell College in Iowa.

2000: California voters pass Proposition 21, the Gang Violence and Juvenile Crime Prevention Act, to treat juvenile offenders as adults; it expands criminal penalties for youth and lowers to 14 the age at which youth can be charged and prosecuted as adults.

2000: South Carolina becomes the last state in the U.S. to make Martin Luther King Jr. Day a paid holiday for all state employees.

2000: The Navajo Nation organizes Diné CARE, a national multiracial and multistate coalition to fight for environmental justice.

2001: Cincinnati convulses with four days of civil unrest following the fatal shooting of Timothy Thomas, a 19-year-old black male, by white police officer Steven Roach, becoming the largest urban rebellion in the United States since the Los Angeles riots in 1992.

2001: The increase in hate crimes and other acts of harassment targeting immigrant workers, such as the attempted murder of two day laborers in Farmingdale, prompts the formation of the National Day Laborer Organizing Network.

2001: Reports surface of acts of violence and harassment against Muslim and Arab Americans days after the Sept. 11 attacks. Four days after 9/11, Balbir Singh Sodhi, a Sikh gas station owner in Mesa, Arizona, is shot and killed by Frank Rocque.

2001: The ACLU of Northern California creates the Racial Justice Project to focus on racial profiling by law enforcement.

2001: The U.S.A. PATRIOT Act is passed by Congress with virtually no debate; the act gives the federal government the power to detain suspected “terrorists” for an unlimited period without access to legal representation. Over 1000 Arab, Muslim, and South Asian men are detained in secret locations.

2002: The Supreme Court upholds the use of race as one of many factors in admissions to colleges and universities.

2002: Edgar J. Killen, the ringleader in the murder of the Mississippi civil rights workers (Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman), is convicted of manslaughter on the 41st anniversary of the crime.

2002: The first North American Indigenous Mining Summit is held. Working groups develop action plans to address coal, uranium, and metallic mining activities on Native American lands.

2002: The newly created Department of Homeland Security requires thousands of immigrant men from countries with large Muslim populations to report to federal authorities under a special registration program, leading to a wave of detentions and deportations.

2002: Japanese-American community leaders, many of whom had been held as prisoners with their families during World War II, organize rallies and teach-ins to draw parallels between the history of internment and the racist treatment of Muslims, South Asians, and Arabs in the wake of 9/11.

2003: *Grutter v. Bollinger* and *Gratz v. Bollinger* reach the Supreme Court. In the first case, the court upholds the University of Michigan law school’s admissions policy, while it rules in the second against the university’s undergraduate admissions policy.

2003: Joining the ranks of other newspapers, the *Nebraska Journal Star* amends its style and will no longer print the “redskin” racial slur.

2004: President George W. Bush announces a new temporary “guest worker” plan that would allow undocumented immigrants working in the U.S. to apply for temporary status.

2004: The Bush Administration announces new rules that allow U.S. Border Patrol agents to deport undocumented immigrants without a hearing before an immigration judge.

2004: The American Indian Forum on Racism in Sports and Media is held at Black Bear Crossing in St. Paul, Minnesota.

2005: Border activists organize against the anti-immigration Minuteman Project.

2005: Hurricane Katrina devastates New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region, claiming over 1,800 lives. Institutional racism and the neglect of poor communities become central issues as low-income African Americans are among the most affected.

2005: Four states in the U.S. have a majority-minority population: California, Texas, New Mexico and Hawaii. Mid-census data project that the U.S. will have a majority of people of color within the next 40 years.

2005: HR 4437, “The Border Protection, Anti-terrorism and Illegal Immigration Control Act,” passes in the House of Representatives. The controversial bill would have made immigration violations a criminal felony; it ultimately fails in the Senate but galvanizes the immigrant rights movement.

2006: Millions participate in protests that contribute to the defeat of anti-immigrant legislation. Marches take place simultaneously in 102 cities across the country.

2006: Congress passes and President Bush signs a bill renewing the 1965 Voting Rights Act for 25 years. In the days leading up to the vote, more than 100,000 reauthorization petitions are collected and 15,000 calls for renewal are made to Congressional offices from voters in all 50 states.

2006: The Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosa Parks and Coretta Scott King Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 provides for bilingual ballots and other protections for language minorities in 500 jurisdictions. Section 8 requires federal observers to document and deter intimidation and discrimination at the polls.

2006: A coalition of more than 70 environmental justice, social justice, public health, human rights, and workers’ rights groups launches the National Environmental Justice for All Tour to highlight the devastating impact of toxic contamination on people of color and in poor communities across the United States.

2006: Plainclothes and undercover NYPD cops shoot at three African American men a total of 50 times, injuring two and killing Sean Bell on the day before his wedding. The trial of the officers results in not guilty verdicts.

2006: The Indigenous World Uranium Summit drafts and approves a declaration calling for a ban on uranium mining, weapons testing and deployment, and nuclear waste dumping on indigenous lands.

2006: Six black high school students in Jena, Louisiana, are arrested after a school fight and charged with attempted murder. The fight took place not long after nooses were found hanging on a tree in the schoolyard where white students typically sat after a black student sat there.

2007: The National Domestic Workers Alliance is founded to fight for the rights of domestic workers and succeeds in passing a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights in New York.

2007: Decisions in *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, along with *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, prohibit assigning students to

public schools solely for the purpose of achieving racial integration and decline to recognize racial balance as a compelling state interest.

2007: 20,000 people march in Jena, Louisiana, to protest the arrest and attempts to convict six African American teenagers of attempted murder in the alleged 2006 assault on a white, fellow student at their high school.

2008: As the economy slips into a major recession, subprime mortgage scandals are felt disproportionately by new black and Latino homeowners, who see their small share of total wealth relative to whites shrink even further.

2008: Barack Obama is elected 44th President of the United States of America.

2009: President Obama signs the Matthew Shepherd and James Byrd Hate Crimes Prevention Act, expanding the 1969 federal hate crime law to include crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability.

2009: Oscar Grant is shot and killed by a Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) police officer, leading to massive demonstrations in Oakland, California; the incident renews the spotlight on police violence against people of color. The transit officer is later convicted.

2009: African-American residents of Mossville, Louisiana, win a hearing before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights on charges that the U.S. government had violated their rights to privacy and racial equality by allowing local chemical plants to pollute.

2009: Former Seattle Police Chief Norm Stamper says the war on drugs has been “an abysmal failure . . . and the most destructive and damning social policy since slavery.”

2009: Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates Jr., one of the nation's pre-eminent African-American scholars, is arrested at his own home by a Cambridge police investigating a possible break-in.

2009: Judge Sonia Sotomayor becomes the first Latina on the U.S. Supreme Court.

2009: The North Carolina Racial Justice Act passes, requiring that courts convert to a life sentence the sentence of any death row defendants able to prove that race was a factor in their sentencing. In 2013, Governor Pat McCrory repeals the landmark legislation.

2010: The Arizona bill S.B. 1070 authorizes police to request papers proving citizenship or immigration status from individuals they suspect to be in the country undocumented.

2010: Home health care workers in Wisconsin and Missouri, most of whom are immigrants and women of color, join workers in 10 other states to organize a union.

2010: Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer signs House Bill 2281, effectively banning the teaching of ethnic studies in public school classrooms after conservative state officials contend the Mexican-American Studies curriculum at a Tucson high school teaches racial resentment and the overthrow of the government.

2010: Volunteers with *No More Deaths*, an organization that seeks to prevent deaths of people crossing the border by leaving one-gallon jugs of water in various Sonoran Desert locations, are fined for littering.

2010: Multiyear campaigning by organizations such as the Sentencing Project win passage of the Fair Sentencing Act, a bill that reduces racial disparities in sentencing for crack and powder cocaine offenses.

2011: The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act, or “DREAM Act,” introduced by Senator Richard Durbin and Representative Howard Berman, would create a pathway to legal status for the thousands of undocumented students who graduate from high school each year.

2011: High school students in Tucson, Arizona, organize to defend the popular Mexican-American Studies program after Arizona politicians vote to ban ethnic studies.

2011: A federal jury convicts five New Orleans police officers of a cover-up and deprivation of civil rights related to the shooting of unarmed African Americans on the Danziger Bridge in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

2012: Native Americans fight against sports logos and the North Dakota Higher Education Board deems the University of North Dakota nickname “Fighting Sioux” as offensive, requiring that the institution drop the nickname.

2012: Several thousand people march from Harlem to the Upper East Side townhouse of Mayor Michael Bloomberg to protest New York City’s “stop-and-frisk” police procedure, which almost exclusively targets young black and Latino males.

2012: U.S. Army veteran and avowed white supremacist Wade Michael Page shoots and kills six people and wounds several others at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin.

2012: Lawsuits and community-based pressure challenge voter identification laws and other efforts by Republican-controlled statehouses across the country to curtail registration and voting in the upcoming elections.

2012: Undocumented youth (DREAMers) take over President Obama’s Denver campaign office and initiate a hunger strike, the first of a series of actions at Democratic campaign offices across the country; President Obama announces the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), a deportation relief program for young, undocumented immigrants.

2013: The Supreme Court strikes down the coverage formula for Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which required jurisdictions with significant histories of voter discrimination to “pre-clear” or get federal approval from the Department of Justice, and show that their proposed changes do not have a discriminatory purpose or effect. Importantly, the 5-4 decision did not strike down Section 5 itself, leaving it to Congress to devise a new coverage formula.

2013: A report by the Asian Law Caucus and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center finds large increases in the number of Asian-Americans living below the poverty line in California; counter to model minority stereotypes of Asian success, Hmong-, Cambodian-,

Laotian-, Vietnamese-, and Fijian-Americans face significant barriers to education and some of the lowest college attendance rates in the country.

2013: After more than 10 years, the “Drop the ‘I’ Word” campaign achieves success as the Associated Press eliminates the term “illegal immigrant” from its widely influential style guide.

2013: The Supreme Court invalidates Section 5 of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, allowing several (mostly Southern) states to modify their election laws without federal approval.

2013: The Supreme Court reverses a key part of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, allowing the adoption of a young girl to white parents in South Carolina away from her Cherokee father in Oklahoma.

2013: The Black Lives Matter movement begins after George Zimmerman is acquitted in the death of Trayvon Martin. Following the shooting deaths of Michael Brown, John Crawford III, and Eric Garner in 2014, and Freddie Gray in 2015, the movement grows.

2013: Building on public outrage over the Trayvon Martin killing, Color of Change and its allies mount a campaign that eventually gets more than 69 corporations to withdraw membership and support from the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the conservative public policy group that engineered “stand your ground” gun laws and sweeping voter identification requirements that effectively disenfranchise minority voters.

2013: In New York, a broad coalition of diverse grassroots groups wins major police accountability reforms; a federal court rules that the NYPD’s “stop and frisk” practice is unconstitutional; the city council overrides a mayoral veto to establish an inspector general for the NYPD.

2014: A mistrial is declared in the shooting death of 17-year old African-American Jordan Davis by Michael Dunn, a 45-year-old white male, at a gas station in Jacksonville, Florida; the jury fails to reach a unanimous verdict even after Dunn admits to shooting Davis during an argument about loud music coming from the car in which Davis and his friends were riding.

2014: The Incarceration to Education Coalition at New York University ignites the “Abolish the Box” campaign to eradicate admissions policies that discriminate against citizens who have completed their time in prison.

2014: Three U.S. presidents commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act at the Lyndon B. Johnson (LBJ) Presidential Library. That same day, Pro Publica previews the findings of a year-long investigation concluding that public schools have re-segregated, and disparities between black and white students have widened.

2014: The U.S. Justice Department launches the National Center for Building Community Trust and Justice to collect and analyze data on racial profiling in order to reduce racial bias in the criminal justice system.

2014: The Supreme Court upholds a University of Michigan ban on considering race as a factor in university admissions. In her dissenting opinion, Justice Sonia Sotomayer states,

“This refusal to accept the stark reality that race matters is regrettable . . . We ought not sit back and wish away, rather than confront, the racial inequality that exists in our society.”

2014: In *Fisher vs University of Texas Austin*, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit supports the use of race as one of several holistic admission strategies to obtain student diversity in learning environments where racial diversity may otherwise be dismal.

2014: The “Central Park Five” are awarded a \$41 million settlement after a court overturns the 1989 conviction for the sexual assault of a female jogger in Central Park. The settlement nonetheless excuses the City of New York of any wrongdoing.

2014: Protests are held in 62 cities to urge President Obama to stop the deportation of undocumented immigrants. The Obama Administration reaches its two-millionth deportation in April. The *New York Times* reports two-thirds of those deported had committed minor infractions, such as traffic violations, or had no criminal record at all.

2014: #BlackLivesMatter organizes a Freedom Ride similar to the Freedom Rides in the 1960s that brings more than 500 black people from across the nation into Ferguson, Missouri, to support the work of local groups. As of March 2015, at least 700 Black Lives Matter demonstrations have been held worldwide.

2015: Nine African American parishioners at the historic AME church in Charleston, North Carolina, are murdered by a white man professing white supremacist ideology.

Sources

- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) (2015). Arizona’s SB 1070 Law. Retrieved from <https://www.aclu.org/feature/arizonas-sb-1070?redirect=arizonas-sb-1070>
- Associated Press (June, 2012). ND School officially drops Fighting Sioux nickname. *Washington Examiner*. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/nd-school-officially-drops-fighting-sioux-nickname/article/feed/2002757>
- Calefati, J. (May, 2010). Arizona bans ethnic studies [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2010/05/ethnic-studies-banned-arizona>
- Cho, E. H., Arguelles Paz y Puente, F., Louie, M. C. Y., & Khokha, S. (2004). *Bridge: Building a race and immigration dialogue in the global economy*. Oakland, CA: National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.
- Davis, J. E. (2000). *The civil rights movement*. Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Donato, R. (1997). *The other struggle for equal schools: Mexican Americans during the civil rights era*. Albany, NY: The State University of New York Press.
- Foster, L. H. (1961). Race relations in the South, 1960. *Journal of Negro Education*, 30(2), 138–149.
- Gonzalez, J. (2000). *Harvest of empire: A history of Latinos in the U.S.* New York: Penguin.
- Immigration Policy Center (2010). The Dream Act. Retrieved from <http://www.immigrationpolicy.org/just-facts/dream-act>
- Nies, J. (1996). *Native American history: A chronology*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Norton, M. B. et al. (1994). *A people and a nation: A history of the United States* (4th ed.). New York: Houghton-Mifflin.
- Pohlman, M. D., & Whisenhunt, L. V. (2000). *Students’ guide to landmark Congressional laws on civil rights*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press. Retrieved from <http://racialequity.org/docs/CIF5Timeline.pdf>
- Springs, J. (2009). *Deculturalization and the struggle for equality* (5th ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Takaki, R. (1989). *Strangers from a different shore: A history of Asian Americans*. Boston: Little, Brown.

Modified from Timeline by:

Bell, L. A., Joshi, K. Y., & Zuniga, X. (2007). Globalization, immigration and racism. In M. Adams, L. A. Bell, & P. Griffin (Eds.), *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 145–166.). New York: Routledge.

Most of the entries from 2000 forward are adapted from the www.racialequity.org timeline.