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The Afro-American Education throughout the History of  
the United States

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## ABSTRACT

Afro-American segregation has been one of the most controversial issues in the United States since slaves' Emancipation was approved by the President Abraham Lincoln in 1865. Since then, the Afro-American community has fought in order to get the equality between black and white people in all the spheres of the society. Education has been one of the most important topics. This work tries to give a perspective of the Afro-American education and all the obstacles that black people have had to face to obtain the same education as white people since the slaves' liberation until today.

Segregation, Inequality, Afro-American people, Afro-American education, Educational institutions, Higher Education

La segregación de los Afro-Americanos ha sido uno de los temas más polémicos en los Estados Unidos desde que fue aprobada la Emancipación de los esclavos por el presidente Abraham Lincoln en 1855. Desde entonces, la comunidad Afro-Americana ha luchado para conseguir la igualdad entre blancos y negros en todos los ámbitos de la sociedad. La educación ha sido uno de los temas más importantes. Este trabajo pretende ofrecer una perspectiva de la educación de los Afro-Americanos y los obstáculos que la raza negra ha encontrado para recibir la misma educación que la comunidad blanca desde la liberación de los esclavos hasta hoy en día.

Segregación, Desigualdad, Afro-Americanos, Educación Afro-Americana, Instituciones educativas, Educación superior.



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Throughout American history, the social status of the Afro-American people has changed the most notably in its latest history. One thing that many people do not know is that the first Afro-Americans that arrived in the United States were not slaves, who constituted an important part of the population of this country and they also performed a significant role in the cultural development of this territory. There was a big difference between the number of slaves that lived in the South and those that lived in the North.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, there were about 27,817 slaves living in the USA but only 5,206 of them were located in the North while the remaining 22,611 lived in the South,<sup>1</sup> many of whom tried to escape and go up north in order to get a better life.

The number and the use of slaves rose due to the growth and expansion of the colonies and thus, the Afro-Americans became the principal source of men as cheap labour. This community was a vital and essential motor for the economy of the United States for over two hundred and forty years.

This sector of the society used to work in the plantations of cotton, sugar, rice and tobacco or at the master's house, among other places. Their working timetable was usually from sunrise to sunset with an average of fifteen or sixteen hours a day and although not all the slaves were treated in the same way, many of them were badly beaten up and punished by the white men. Being lashed was one of the most common punishments for them. The master owned not only the slaves' work but also their own lives.

Slaves had a poor diet; they usually ate salt meat, chicken and rarely some vegetables. Their meals were based on carbohydrates, which was the reason for many of the illnesses such as the measles or the smallpox that slaves used to have. Masters provided slaves with their clothing but most of them were barefoot.

Slaves' lodgings could be very different: there were "houses" in urban places and on farms. Those that lived on farms usually had nearby buildings where they slept and they could share the kitchen; others lived in the attic or even in the basement of the master's house. When the slaves increased in number and they started to create families, their kind of

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<sup>1</sup> Carmona, "El racismo sigue vivo en Estados Unidos"

housing had to be changed. Therefore, it was necessary to build separate lodgings for them so that they could live as family units; their shelters were separated from the master's house and the majority of them only had one or two rooms.

However, these people's education and training was practically non-existent. It is estimated that less than 10% of American slaves could read in 1869. According to white men, black people had a very low intelligence quotient (IQ). This common belief meant that the education for black people was delayed thousands of years and the same happened with the development of the human race.

Maybe this issue about the education regarding this sector of the American population is one of the most controversial topics in the history of the United States. There are some records dating back from the sixteenth century that already include some complaints against slavery and several arguments in favour of the Afro-American education.

When slavery came to an end, the social status of the black inhabitants changes completely in the country from a theoretical point of view since previous slaves are also considered citizens. It was forbidden to prevent them from any civil rights just because of the colour of their skin. Nevertheless, their social and economic relationship with the white men kept on being very similar to the former one and the educational topic does not change up to speed. In the following pages, I will talk about how the Afro-Americans' life develops thanks to their emancipation, trying to analyse the problems they had to face in the Southern states in order to be a part of the American society and how those changes and that progress will also be reflected in their education.

Principally, we will pay our attention to the education of Afro-American people and we will show its development without forgetting what this progress has meant for the Afro-American people. Above all, we will focus on those facts and outstanding personalities who played a decisive role in the education of the Afro-American people, with its both positive and negative effects.

The educational development of Afro-American people in the United States is closely related with different important events that took place in America after the slaves' Emancipation in the year 1863.

## **2. THE TRANSITION**

When the American Civil War ended in 1865, the Thirteenth Amendment was approved. As a result of this new legislation, slavery was abolished completely in every territory of the United States. The president Abraham Lincoln had already announced the slaves' emancipation in 1863, during the Civil War. This statement had two parts ; the first one, which said that all the slaves had to be liberated in the American Confederated states, was presented in 1862 and the second part included the names of the ten different states where it was going to be carried out. The states that belonged to the Union did not need to obey this rule at the beginning but later on, they also had to fulfil it.

Despite this fact, thousands of slaves were set free from the very first day that the Amendment came into effect even though the liberation did not take place all of a sudden. It is estimated that 20,000 slaves became free men and women and about four million had already been liberated two years later. However, slavery was not an illegal institution, which allowed it to continue to exist until 1865.

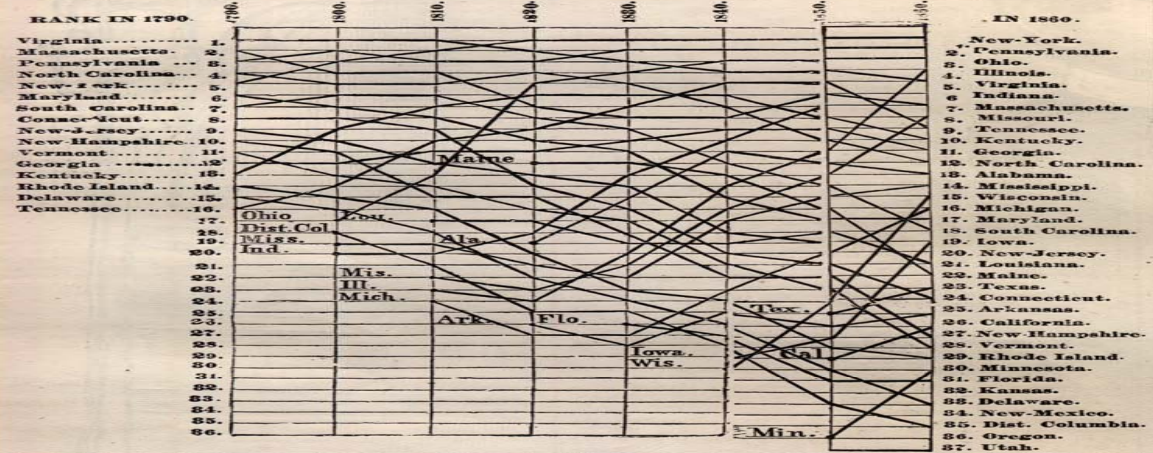


## The Afro-American Education throughout the History of the United States

The following image shows the census of the United States in the year 1860. We can see the number of slaves and free people in each state in 1850 and ten years later. This picture is a chart that was published on *Harper's Weekly*, a weekly newspaper.

STATES.	CENSUS OF 1850.			CENSUS OF 1860.			59TH CONGRESS.		
	Free.	Slave.	Total.	Free.	Slave.	Total.	Reps.	Low.	Gain.
Alabama	428,777	342,844	771,621	529,164	435,132	964,296	3	1	1
Arkansas	162,797	47,100	209,897	224,323	111,104	335,427	6	..	1
California	92,597	..	92,597	380,015	..	380,015	4	..	..
Connecticut	370,792	..	370,792	460,151	..	460,151	4	..	..
Delaware	59,242	2,290	61,532	110,420	1,798	112,218	1	..	..
Florida	48,125	39,810	87,935	58,686	61,793	120,479	7	1	..
Georgia	524,693	384,632	909,325	590,697	462,530	1,053,227	13	..	4
Illinois	851,470	..	851,470	1,711,753	..	1,711,753	13	..	5
Indiana	988,416	..	988,416	1,350,479	..	1,350,479	11	..	4
Iowa	192,214	..	192,214	674,948	..	674,948	5	..	..
Kansas	..	..	..	107,110	..	107,110	1	..	..
Kentucky	771,424	210,981	982,405	920,223	225,490	1,145,713	5	2	1
Louisiana	312,933	244,809	557,742	376,913	332,529	709,442	5	1	..
Maine	583,16	..	583,16	628,276	..	628,276	5	..	..
Maryland	492,622	90,368	582,990	599,846	27,188	627,034	7	..	..
Massachusetts	994,514	..	994,514	1,231,065	..	1,231,065	10	1	..
Mississippi	296,648	299,878	596,526	354,699	456,096	810,795	9	..	2
Missouri	594,622	..	594,622	1,028,352	..	1,028,352	9	..	..
Michigan	37,654	..	37,654	749,112	..	749,112	6	1	2
Minnesota	6,077	..	6,077	162,022	..	162,022	1	..	..
New Hampshire	317,976	..	317,976	326,072	..	326,072	3	..	..
New Jersey	489,319	236	489,555	672,031	..	672,031	7	..	..
New York	3,097,394	288,548	3,385,942	3,887,642	861,081	4,748,723	31	1	..
North Carolina	580,491	..	580,491	869,566	..	869,566	18	..	..
Ohio	1,989,329	..	1,989,329	2,339,599	..	2,339,599	18	3	..
Oregon	..	..	..	52,454	..	52,454	1	..	..
Pennsylvania	2,311,736	..	2,311,736	2,906,370	..	2,906,370	23	2	..
Rhode Island	147,545	..	147,545	174,621	..	174,621	1	1	..
South Carolina	283,529	354,984	638,513	301,271	402,541	703,812	4	2	..
Tennessee	763,258	223,459	986,717	834,063	275,784	1,109,847	7	..	..
Texas	154,431	68,161	222,592	420,654	189,388	610,042	4	..	2
Vermont	314,120	..	314,120	315,116	..	315,116	2	..	..
Virginia	949,132	472,528	1,421,660	1,105,106	470,687	1,575,793	11	2	..
Wisconsin	305,391	..	305,391	775,873	..	775,873	6	..	3
Pop. of States	19,886,662	3,209,600	23,096,262	27,185,169	3,949,557	31,134,726	233	24	10
Territories	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Colorado	..	..	..	34,197	..	34,197	..	..	..
Dakota	..	..	..	4,839	..	4,839	..	..	..
Nebraska	..	..	..	28,832	10	28,842	..	..	..
Nevada	..	..	..	6,857	..	6,857	..	..	..
New Mexico	61,547	..	61,547	93,517	24	93,541	..	..	..
Utah	11,254	26	11,280	49,266	29	49,295	..	..	..
Washington	58,000	2,687	60,687	11,578	..	11,578	..	..	..
Dist. of Col.	..	..	..	71,895	3,181	75,076	..	..	..
TOTAL POP.	19,987,533	3,204,313	23,191,846	27,477,009	3,952,801	31,429,810	..	..	..
* Deduct the population of the seven "Cov.-Federal States" 1860 .....									
Population of the other, according to the Census of 1860 .....									
24,820,609				1,641,541		26,462,150			

The following Table, for which we are indebted to the courtesy of the *New York Times*, shows the progress of population in each State from 1790 to 1860:



One year later, the Fourteenth Amendment was presented on 13th June. This modification of the American Constitution proposes the *Law of the Civil Rights*, which states that every black person must be considered a citizen and, therefore, they have the same rights as the

<sup>2</sup> "Slave Census"

white people. In spite of the fact that the president, Andrew Johnson, who was a democratic man, vetoed the law, this eventually came into force.

However, the situation of the Afro-American people did not change too much, not even after their liberation. As we said before, the situation was not the same in the Northern States and in the Southern States, and this kept on happening after the Civil War. The black population was not accepted the same way in the South as in the North of the United States. For instance, there were black people associations in the North that give us an evidence of this difference.

### **2.1. The Free African Society**

An example of this existing inequality between the North and the South was *the Free African Society* of Philadelphia, which was something inconceivable in a Southern state. This society had already started with those black men and women that had got their freedom and emigrated to the North in 1787, whose steps would be followed by many others after the abolition of slavery.

The Free African Society wanted to help the black people that lived in Philadelphia. Its leaders, Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, who were free black men, hoped to create a religious organization that took care of the spiritual, economic and social needs of the Afro-American people of the city. There were already 2,000 free black men and women in Philadelphia in 1790, a number that increased a lot after the Emancipation.

The main aim of the Free American Society was to look after the orphans and widows; it also provided medical attention to the ill people as those who suffered from the yellow fever in 1793. The work performed by the FAS in this situation was really huge; the members of the society gave a hand as well as the nurses and the assistants.

We cannot ignore either the role of the Free African Society in the education of the Afro-American people; ten schools were built for the black people in Philadelphia thanks to this society.

But while the Afro-American situation was better in the North, Afro-American people found serious difficulties in the South to have the same rights as white people. The Reconstruction period was a hard time for the Southern Afro-American people.

## 2.2 The Reconstruction

At the end of the American Civil war in 1865, a new period began in which all those matters and conflicts that had begun during the war but had not been solved yet were discussed. The Reconstruction period lasted until 1877. During these twelve years, one of the purposes was to join together those Southern states that had not belonged to the American Union until that moment. Also, people tried to look for links between the Southern economy, based on the agriculture, and the Northern one, which relied mainly on the industry and the trade. The equality between black and white people was also an issue that was dealt with during these years.

Some Afro-American people decided to migrate to the North and try to make their way there after they had been set free, due to the fact that the integration of the black people was practically non-existent in the South.

These Afro-American people that arrived at the North, started to work in the car factories, in the building sector or in the widening of the railways. Most of them emigrated to big cities such as Chicago and New York. They lived in “black” neighbourhoods because when they began to turn up in some areas of the cities and live there, the white people preferred to move to other places, so these neighbourhoods were full of Afro-American people principally. These areas were situated in the centre of the cities; they became the “ghettos” of the cities, since they were overcrowded and there the black people lived crammed whereas the White people moved to live in the suburbs that were considered the rich places of the cities. The living conditions of the black people improved in the North more and faster than in South and they could afford the education for their children. Due to this, a new Afro-American generation was born that was able to break up with the past.

In the Southern States, getting the real equality for the black population was the most difficult matter to achieve because the Southern Government did not accept the black presence in the political, economic and social life of the country. Examples of this discrimination towards the black people were the secret societies that fought against the Reconstruction. Violence was the principal way that they used in order to get their objectives. One of the societies of this type was the Ku Klux Klan.

### 2.3 The Ku Klux Klan

Maybe the most famous secret society was The Ku Klux Klan. It appeared in Tennessee in the year 1865 and it spread quickly throughout all the South. This society coerced black people into not using their right to vote. The members were situated in the polling places in a threatening way and they prevented the Afro-American people from voting. It is estimated that around 2,000 black people were murdered or suffered from some type of bullying in Louisiana during the previous weeks to the elections. In some cases, as in the presidential elections in Georgia in 1868, the coercion of this society was so strong that there was only one vote in favour of the Republican Party. The situation got worse in the following years, and the murders of black men whose bodies were abandoned on roads and the beatings of black women became something more and more common and frequent. They committed their crimes in the darkness of the night and they used to wear masks. Their goal was to establish the supremacy of the White race.

The Ku Klux Klan was a military force that fought so that things were the same as they were before the Civil War. Not only did they try to stop the right to vote that black people had as we have said before, but also they dealt with the economic development, the guns and the education that the black people had.

The “Anti-Ku Klux” was created in Alabama in 1870 as a type of reaction; its members were old White militaries of the Union Army. They put an end to the violence and threatened with taking reprisals if the mistreatment towards the Afro-American people continued. In addition, the black people themselves also decided to get together in order to fight against the situation.

The Ku Klux Klan was declared a terrorist organization in the year 1870 and at the beginning of 1871 the *Law of the Civil Rights* was created, which was also known as the Ku Klux Klan Law, whose principal aim was to protect the Southern Afro-American people. This law did not give more rights to black people, but at least it allowed them to report those that intimidated them or break their rights. All this contributed to strengthen the Civil Rights in America.

However, when the Afro-American people's situation seemed to improve, Rutherford B. Hayes became President of the United States and black people started to have serious problems again.

## 2.4 Rutherford B. Hayes

In 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes was elected President of the United States after an electoral process full of polemics and confusion that is considered one of the most troublesome processes of the American history. After B. Hayes had lost the popular vote, he achieved the favour of the Electoral College and after a congress commission he was given 20 additional votes. As a sign of his appreciation of the Democratic Party, which helped him to become the President, R. B. Hayes carried on the Agreement of 1877, which meant that Hayes made the troops remove from the South of America. The result of this law was that the Afro-American people were unprotected one more time and there was excessive presence of the White power carried out by the White Conservative Party. This change meant a delay of more than half a century about the rights and equalities of the Black population. The reconstruction period ended with this Agreement and the Democratic Party consolidated its power in the South. From 1877 onwards, the White supremacy spread all over the Southern territory, which became a very discriminatory place for the slaves that had got their liberty before.

The inequalities as regards black people's rights were bigger and bigger and many black people had to go back to the farms where they had been working as slaves. They lived again in the same conditions as previously. Many became sharecroppers and they were paid with a part of the results of the harvest in exchange for working the lands of the property. Of course, the Afro-American education was non-existent. The line that separated slavery from liberty was so thin and inequality and discrimination came to such a point that something had to be done and *Jim Crow Laws* were created.



## 2.5 Jim Crow Laws

The expression “ Jim Crow “ comes from a troubadour performance, which was done by a white actor, Thomas Dartmouth, who used to paint his face in black colour in order to look like an Afro-American person.

*Jim Crow Laws* were used during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Their main purpose was the racial segregation in all the Southern territory; they were laws that demanded the segregation between white and Afro-American people. After these laws began to come into effect, black people started to have problems again when they wanted to use their right to vote and therefore, the number of voters in the Southern states lowered in a radical way. Besides, Jim Crow Laws influenced not only the political life, but also the social situation suffered big changes with the arrival of these laws.

Southern black people could not sit down in the same seats as white people in the public transport and they could not use the same toilets or go to the same restaurants either. Different sports teams were created according to the athletes’ race. Even more, many public services were used only by the white race. The public drinking fountains also became a tool to carry out this segregation.

The following statements are extracts from some of the laws that were used in several states.

The public transport laws in Alabama were clear: “ *All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the White and colored races* “. <sup>3</sup>

This one is about the interracial marriage prohibition in Arizona: “*The marriage of a person of Caucasian blood with a Negro, Mongolian, Malay or Hindu shall be null and void* “. <sup>4</sup>

Some laws were so absurd as the law regarding the textbooks in the North of California:

“*Books shall not be interchangeable between the White and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them* “. <sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3,4,5</sup> “Jim Crow Laws”

Also, the Afro-American economy was coerced; there were a lot of attempts to prevent the black community from developing from an economic point of view so that they did not have any other chances apart from continuing working in the jobs that the white people offered them in exchange for a really low salary.

But, maybe, one of the most affected rights by Jim Crow Laws was the right to education.

### **3. EDUCATION**

#### **3.1 Elementary and higher Afro-American education**

After their liberation, the Afro-Americans showed a great interest in education. There is a large increase in the number of schooling black people during the following years to the Emancipation.

Trying to make true the slogan of “ Separate but Equal “, white people wanted to carry out the racial segregation in every aspect of the society. However, this equality was not entirely true. All Southern states had laws that supported segregation in schools in 1900. The public schools where white children went received more money than the black ones, which got the lowest amount of money possible. Due to this difference between the received funds, there were big distinctions between the white schools and the black schools as regards equipment, facilities and material. As a matter of fact, if two dollars were invested in black schools, it was three the number of dollars that were invested in white schools in 1900. Thirty years later, the investment in Afro-American schools continued being the same, while the investment in white schools had been multiplied.<sup>6</sup> An example of this educational inequality is the school of Farmville, in Virginia, which is a museum nowadays. Joy Speakes, a former student that attended classes in Monton School, says that the school should have been for 180 children and however, 450 children went to that school. When it rained, there was a lot of water leaking from the roof and they had to open their umbrellas

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<sup>6</sup> Hope 547

during the lessons in order not to get wet. Her school had nothing to do with the school for white children, just two blocks away northwards, which had a canteen and a gym.<sup>7</sup>

The teachers that worked at the black schools were not the same as those that taught at the schools for white children; the former ones had a worse training. Their salary was not the same either, just depending on whether they worked in a white school or in a black one.

With the arrival of the Great Depression or the Financial Crisis of 1929, the equality between the white schools and the Afro-American schools happened at a slower speed. Now, not only the funds for black schools were lowered, but also there was a reduction in the budget for the white schools. Nevertheless, it is important to say and bear in mind that the black community was always more damaged by the reductions.

Even in the North, the black children were forced to go to schools only for black people. This was not really complicated, since those schools were located in the areas where black people lived (ghettos).

In the States of Kansas and Arizona, the racial segregation was only compulsory in the elementary education; however, the secondary education was also divided. This segregationist system increased when the white people started to use violence to prevent the black people from attending institutions for both races. The parents of the white children stopped taking their kids to schools as a protest so that the Afro-American children were separated again in different buildings during the elementary education.

In spite of the difficulties that the Afro-American people faced so that they were able to study, the illiteracy rate among black people was reduced considerably. In 1870, the 80% of black people was illiterate and 6 years later, the rate was lowered to 16%.<sup>8</sup> Despite this progress, it seems impossible to estimate the inequalities that the segregation in education created between the blacks and the whites. It is clear that this segregation was an important strategy carried out by the white people in order to continue with their supremacy over the black race and that the educational segregation also brought segregation in the economic and political issues.

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<sup>7</sup> García- Aforín, Lola

<sup>8</sup> Hope 548-550



Fortunately, from 1950 onwards, we can notice a movement in favour of the democratization of the education and people started to think about the education for the adult Afro-American population, too. The consequences of Morrill's Act are one of the facts that proves this idea.

### 3.2 Morrill's Act

The higher education of Afro-American people was also very limited. In the year 1860, even before slavery was abolished, the president Abraham Lincoln passed *Morrill's Act*: thirty acres of land were given to each member of the Congress Delegation so that universities were built in different American states and therefore education would be more accessible to all the social classes; the Money that was got from the sales would be used in the building of those educational institutions. Universities taught their students different subjects such as agriculture, home economics, mechanics, military tactics and other professions that were necessary and useful during those years.

After the Emancipation, the black people from the South could not attend the universities that had been built thanks to the concession system of land. Only the Universities of Mississippi and Kentucky carried out the segregation, allowing the Afro-American people to go to university, but they had to be separated from the white people.

Thirty years later, the second *Morrill Act* was passed; it made those states that had separated colleges for white and black people divide the funds in an equitable way. Some of these states had invested the 100% of the money received in the buildings and facilities that were used by only white students. Because of this, these institutions had to open centres with the same characteristics for Afro-American students.

This way, sixteen new universities for black people were built, which were the result of the concession of lands in the Southern states. They are known as "The 1890 Land-Grand Institutions".

Many Afro-American men that later on have become leaders and who have performed a very important role in the fight for the equality of the black race studied at these universities.

Another decisive contribution to the development of the Afro-American education was carried out by Julius Rosenwald. His fund brought a great change in the education of this community.

### **3.3 Julius Rosenwald Fund**

Julius Rosenwald's help was very useful for the Afro-American schools. Rosenwald, who was the president of an American chain of shops called Sears, became interested in the black people education, so he created the Julius Rosenwald Fund, thanks to which he donated millions of dollars and he was concerned about the building of schools for the black population of America.

Between 1913 and 1932 more than 5,000 schools were built in the Southern states. They are known as "The Rosenwald schools" for black children. The Afro-American communities that lived in those localities also helped in the building of those schools.

Furthermore, houses for teachers and more than 150 workshops were constructed.

Rosenwald took care not only of the primary education of the Afro-American people, but he also built five secondary schools that had a total capacity for 662,615 students.

When his schedule was over, one in five rural schools for Afro-American students in the Southern states had been created by Rosenwald, and 30% of the Afro-American population that went to school studied in one of these centres.<sup>9</sup>

Also, there was support to Afro-American higher education. Before he created his foundation, Julius Rosenwald let the principal of Tuskegee University use a certain amount of the money so that he could build six little schools in the rural areas of Alabama. Those schools were for adult people, who learnt the same subjects as those which were taught in the University. Afterwards, Rosenwald became a member of the Council of Tuskegee High School and donated more than two million dollars to Universities for black people such as the centres of Tuskegee or Howard among others. All together, the Julius Rosenwald Fund gave about sixty-three million dollars to the Afro-American education in all the Educative levels.

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<sup>9</sup> Hope 548

But maybe, all those things could not have been carried out without the help of his friend, the Principal of the University of Tuskegee, Booker T. Washington, who suffered in his own flesh the miseries of slavery and the discrimination to Afro-American people after their Emancipation. He achieved that hundreds of Afro-Americans protested and marched in order to fight for their economy and education.

Education was always such an important issue for him that he became the principal of Tuskegee High School in 1881, which was called Tuskegee University some time afterwards. Washington worked as a teacher in Hampton and he was recommended for the post of Principal, in spite of the fact that this job had always been performed by white men. The University had as their main goal the training of the black Afro-American community in the professions related to agriculture, stockbreeding, industry and building as well as an academic formation. The institution had been created by a former slave, Lewis Adams, who noticed that Afro-American people would have a hard future because they had not any type of education, and an old master, George W. Campbell, who decided to support the building of schools for black people with his own money. Besides, Adams was successful because thanks to his enthusiasm, the Government granted two thousand dollars in order to create a training school for Afro-Americans' teachers. When Washington got the post of Principal, he fulfilled the University's founders' desires and he built a school to train teachers in a property of the city. In 1883, Washington bought a piece of land and established the campus of Tuskegee University there. As a method of payment, students were employed as workers and they built the buildings. In the year 1899, the congress donated 25,000 acres of land to this university. For this reason, although the institution was born by means of the Land Concessions Law, this University has always been associated with the institutions that were built by this legislation.

Thanks to this type of aids, the Afro-American education started to be more and more important, and educational institutions for black people began to be created even by the government.

### **3.4 Educational Institutions for Black People**

The institutions which were used for black people's higher studies were of three different types: Church Colleges, Privately Endowed Colleges and Public Colleges. During the following years to the American Civil War, there were many institutions of these types and the public ones have been the most successful during the last fifty years. Church Colleges were study centres devoted to the Afro-American education in the South of America and they had as an aim to offer black people the same educational possibilities as white people had. At those schools, a religious education was also provided. The Church Colleges received not only ecclesiastic funds but also public ones. Saint Paul College in Lawrenceville (Virginia), Saint Augustine College in Raleigh, in the state of North Carolina and the Bishop Payne Theology School in Petersburg, also in Virginia, are a current example of these Afro-American schools related to the church. The majority of this type of colleges is previous to those that were only financed by public funds.

On the other hand, there were privately endowed colleges that, as their own name suggests, were private and they could survive thanks to the money that some rich personalities donated to these institutions. Boston University, George Washington University and Harvard University are an example of this type of organization. This educational system has been one of the most important ones in the education of the United States, even more, there are also primary and secondary schools that are supported by this donation system. However, in the 20th century, donation was lowered considerably and many of these schools had to close down.

With the third type of educational institution, the public colleges, Afro-American people also faced many difficulties to study just because they were black. Even in the year 1963, the Governor of the State of Virginia, George Wallace, whose famous sentence was "Segregation now, segregation tomorrow and segregation for ever", refused the black people integration in the university of Alabama. In the North, the situation was not very different either; until the Second World War was over, the number of Afro-American people studying at universities was practically non-existent. An example of this is the case of Lloyd Lionel Gaines. In 1938, this man from Afro-American origin was rejected to attend the Law School at Missouri University because he was an Afro-American man and

neither he was paid a non-resident university fee in a university belonging to another state where there was no racial discrimination (Universities had to pay those costs). Gaines, furious because of this discrimination and supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) fled a claim to the Supreme Court of the United States, which stated that he was right and he succeeded in his claim, so the University of Missouri had two choices: either Lloyd Lionel Gaines was admitted in the institution or they had to build an independent school for those Afro-American people that wanted to attend classes there.

Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada, Registrar of the University, et al:

If a State furnishes higher education to white residents, it is bound to furnish substantially equal advantages to negro residents, though not necessarily in the same schools. (...) That is a denial of the equality of legal right to the enjoyment of the privilege that the State has set up, and the provision for the payment of tuition fees in another State does not remove the discrimination.<sup>10</sup>

As it might be expected, soon afterwards an old school was provided for Afro-American students. However, the NAACP wondered if that place was suitable enough for black people and they thought to take action on this matter. Gaines himself hoped to start the classes when one night he mysteriously disappeared.

The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States had a great influence in the society of the country. The non-resident tuition fees were revised, so that they could be more accessible and there was an increase in the amount of money that was used to pay those fees. Some universities worried about improving their facilities. All those measures that were carried out were just a smokescreen so that the racial segregation continued in the educational institutions. Only the States of Maryland and West Virginia were really concerned about finishing with the discrimination and they accepted Afro-American students in their classes.

In the South, the segregationist attempts in education continued. The Afro-American people that wanted to study at the university faced a big number of problems. Similar to Lloyd Lionel Gaines' case in 1938 with the Law School of the Missouri University was Hermán

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<sup>10</sup> "Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada, Registrar of the University of Missouri"

Marion Sweatt's case with the Law School of Texas University. In 1950, these institutions refused to admit this Afro-American man just because he was black. In Texas, there were no facilities for Afro-American students yet, and as a consequence, Sweatt had to wait more than half a year in order to start his lessons. Things changed in barely six months but the new facilities that were aimed at black people had nothing to do with those for white men. The inequality was evident and the Supreme Court took action against it. Not only the Supreme Court was in disagreement with the action, but also with the education that was taught there. The Supreme Court declared that a separated school could not offer an education based on the equality and they ordered Hermán Sweatt to attend classes in the facilities for the white people in the Texas University Law School.

Sweatt PINTOR v, 339 EE.UU. 629 (1950) Sweatt v PINTOR ET AL:

The University of Texas Law School has 16 full-time and three part-time professors, 850 students, a library of 65,000 volumes, a law review, moot court facilities, scholarship funds, and Order of the Coif Affiliation, many distinguished alumni, and much tradition and prestige. The separate law school for Negroes has five full-time professors, 23 students, a library of 16,500 volumes, a practice court, a legal aid association and one alumnus admitted to the Texas Bar; but it excludes from its student body members of racial groups which number 85% of the population of the State and which include most of the lawyers, witnesses, jurors, judges and other officials with whom petitioner would deal as a member of the Texas Bar. Held: the legal education offered petitioner is not substantially equal to that which he would receive if *admitted to the University of Texas Law School; and the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment requires that he be admitted to the University of Texas Law School.*<sup>11</sup>

Twelve years later, the Afro-American situation had not changed or developed too much and a similar story happened at Missisipi University but this time in a more violent way. James Meredith was an Afro-American young man that had just been admitted in the University of Missisipi. When the governor Ross Barnett heard about it, he opposed to it totally. It was such his rejection that he ordered the army and the Federal agents to take part in this matter, which had as a consequence important riots where about thirty people were

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<sup>11</sup> "U.S. Supreme Court"

seriously injured. However, Garnett did not achieve his goal and James Meredith got his degree in Political Studies on 18th August 1963.

The Southern white people observed how segregation faced more and more obstacles in order to remain effective and the supporters of racial segregation decided to focus on its survival between black and white people at least at primary and secondary schools. They paid special attention to build the same facilities for both black and white children. Furthermore, some universities, as the University of Arkansas, even admitted the first Afro-American students voluntarily. Besides, many of the educational institutions not only began to admit black students in their classes, but also the people in charge of these institutions, who had always been white men, started to be Afro-American men. As a matter of fact, in 1956, the universities for coloured people used to have a black man as their principal and there were very few universities that were still directed by a white man. The situation was also changing in the North and more than 40 % of the Northern Universities had black teachers in their staffs.<sup>12</sup>

But the most worrying issue for American people continued being the coexistence between black and white students in the classes. Even though the best colleges that were built with the best installations were for the black children of the Southern communities and that the Southern leaders tried by all possible means that there were no differences between black and white students, there were still complaints in the Afro-American community: the investment in the Afro-American education had arrived late and now they wanted not only the same opportunities as white people had in a separated way but also they attempted to finish with the segregation in those educational levels.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) helped, as its own name suggests, the Afro-American community in the fight for their rights as American citizens. In fact, the case of Gines, which we have already commented, is an example of the cases that this association defended.

Education was one of the issues that the NAACP was really interested in and as they based on the idea that the facilities for Afro-American people would never be identical to the installations for the white race, they presented five examples of these inequalities in

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<sup>12</sup> Hope 552

different Southern states of America to the Supreme Court so that they could request the end of segregation in the classes in all the educational levels.

The South of California, Kansas, the District of Columbia, Delaware and Virginia were clear examples of this educational inequality. Some very obvious proofs of this segregation were presented and there were votes in favour as well as against finishing with this segregation.

Some members of the Court agreed that the inequalities were clear and something had to be done to solve the problems but some others did not see this idea so clearly. However, the Supreme Court did not know to what an extent they could ignore the doctrine of “separate but equal”.

Besides, the President of the Supreme Court refused to give back the Segregation Law. This President suddenly died two weeks later due to a heart attack, without having resolved the case and leaving his post to be occupied by Earl Warren.

In 1954, a year after Earl Warren had been appointed the Supreme Tribunal President, he emitted the Supreme Tribunal decision in the case known as *Brown v. Board of education*.

### **3.5 Brown V. Board of Education**

We come then to the question presented: Does segregation of children in public schools solely on the basis of race, even though the physical facilities and other “tangible” factors may be equal, deprive the children of the minority group of equal educational opportunities? We believe that it does ..... We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment.<sup>13</sup>

The Supreme Court considers unanimously that the racial segregated educational institutions reject the equality and violate the article of equality of legal rights of the Fourteenth Amendment. Although the installations for black and white people are identical

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<sup>13</sup> “Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka- 347.U.S. 483 (1954)”



and teachers are equally qualified, the segregation affects Afro-American students in a negative way and therefore they are in a disadvantaged position in comparison with white students.

This new law meant an end to what had been established with the Plessy v. Ferguson case in 1896, which considered the segregation in public places legal provided that there was equality between black and white people. From 1954 onwards, segregation in the public educational institutions became illegal.

The reaction of the states, mainly from the South, against this new law was very sudden and some states showed their disagreement, even in a violent way; there were interracial disturbances and hard resistance to the integration of Afro-American people. Some states threatened to close their public educational institutions if the segregation was not allowed in the classes and the black and white students had to mingle together. In fact, many of them closed down.

The white students that had attended classes in those institutions now received grants so that they could pay their studies in a private school, even in private schools where the racial segregation still existed due to the fact that the Brown Law was only applied to public institutions. Also, the transport of white students to these private schools was paid.

Meanwhile, the Afro-American education was practically non-existent. The segregationist people tried that this new law did not become effective by all means because they were aware that the end of the educational segregation would mean the end of the inferiority of the black race from a social point of view as well.

In 1956, the Congress of the United States declared their opposition to the Afro-American integration in public places. This document is known as The Declaration of Constitutional Principles or Southern Manifesto. The politicians from the states of Alabama, Louisiana, Texas and Tennessee among others signed this manifesto. They accused the Supreme Court of power abuse due to the decision they had made in the Brown v. Board of Education case and they were ready to fight so that the segregated educational institutions were not prohibited. Even a legislation was passed in one state that declared that it was impossible to teach black and white children together in the same schools and many people thought

about delegating the administration of public schools to private organizations in order that the Afro-American people were not accepted in them.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, some public schools were closed for almost five years, as in the state of Virginia. When the schools opened their doors again, many of the Afro-American children had already grown and they never restarted their studies.

Ruby Bridges was the first black girl that attended a school for white students in 1960. Several federals of the state were sent to her house in order to take the girl to school. The school where Bridges was supposed to go was the William Franz School, which had been only for white students until then. When she arrived at the door, the screams were so loud that nothing else could be heard and it was such a difficult situation that the girl was not able to get to her class. Bridges suffered a great discrimination; she could not even use the cafeteria service, go to the playground or to the toilet without the presence of the men that protected her. Besides, a lot of white children stopped attending classes there and she was taught the lessons alone.<sup>15</sup> It is clear that although the law was obeyed, segregation was more evident than ever in the William Franz School.

Nevertheless, other states decided to show a pacific attitude towards the law that prohibited the segregation in class and they accepted Afro-American children in schools that had been only for white children before.

There is no doubt that the Brown v. Board of Education case produced a very important change in the history of America and in the Afro-American role in the United States.

The end of segregation in the schools also brought the final of segregation in many other aspects of the American life. The case meant an important step forwards for the Civil Rights Movement and the Human Rights Movement in the United States.

But, as it might be expected, the Afro-American integration was not immediate and in spite of the fact that segregation became illegal after the year 1954, there were still some cases of this type during the following years.

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<sup>14</sup> Hope 557

<sup>15</sup> Peguero, Sorayda

#### 4.CURRENT SITUATION

Segregationists tried to continue the segregation by making the most of the students' economic situation. The Milliken v. Bradley case is an example of the existing segregation still in 1974.

In the year 1970, the NAACP sued the state of Michigan to the Supreme Court because they believed that segregation was being carried out by the schools in Detroit. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People argued that segregation was based on the place where the students' homes were located; those resident students who lived in districts that were situated beyond the limits that had been established could not attend some schools.

On the other hand, the transport issue also favoured the segregation because the bus lines that took children to schools which were mainly for white people were more accessible to white students and those bus lines that took students to schools with more black people were easier for black students to catch.

The Supreme Court admitted that the NAACP was right and ordered that the segregation finished as soon as possible. Besides, the routes of the transport lines were made longer and wider in order that both white and black students could have the same chances to attend the same educative centre.

MILLIKEN v. BRADLEY, 418 U.S. 717 (1974) 418 U.S. 717:

“We granted certiorari in these consolidated cases to determine whether a federal court may impose a multidistrict, areawide remedy to a single-district de jure segregation problem absent any finding that the other included school districts have failed to operate unitary school systems within their districts, absent any claim or finding that the boundary lines of any affected school district were established with the purpose of fostering racial segregation in public schools, absent any finding that the included districts committed acts which effected segregation within the other districts, and absent a [418 U.S. 717, 722] meaningful opportunity for the included neighboring school districts to present evidence or be heard on the propriety of a multidistrict remedy or on the question of constitutional violations by those neighboring districts”<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> “U.S. Supreme Court”

The public schools from Topeka were another case of segregation even after this practice had been declared illegal. Its method of “*open enrolment*” helped to facilitate the inequality between black and white students at the schools. Besides, white people preferred not to attend these schools, so they became schools for almost just black people. This case that began in 1978 is a clear example that shows that maybe educational segregation is not a forgotten issue in the United States.

## 5.CONCLUSION

Nowadays, the economic situation and the lifestyle of many Afro-American people give the possibility to those that are against the equality between both races to put the segregation into practice one more time.

It is true that we have come a long way since slavery was abolished but we still need much more; the fact that this black population continues living separate in some way from the white people as well as the big economic and social distinctions supports this idea.

Efe Vanessa Cardenas, who is a demographic expert, confirms that the majority of Afro-American and Hispanic children attend segregated schools nowadays. Improving the facilities and providing the Access to university are the only way to finish with segregation. “*The education is the only way to leave poverty and marginalization*”.<sup>17</sup>

There are many people who think that segregation is still an important topic in the education of the United States.

Currently, less than half of American students are black people and according to a report of the University of California, the UCLA, the funds for black students continue being different from the funds for white students. The University of California, in Los Angeles, studied the number of enrolments done by Afro-American people and the number of enrolments done by white people in the educative system of New York, which has more than a million students, and the segregation cannot be more evident in this state. Orfield, one of the investigators that carried out the study pointed out: “*During the thirty years that I have devoted to explore the schools, the state of New York has always been one of the*

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<sup>17</sup> “Se celebran 60 años del fin de la segregación escolar en EE.UU”

*states with more segregation in the country. None of the Southern states can be compared with New York*”<sup>18</sup>

Another fact that we must pay attention to is the result of a survey carried out by the Universities of Harvard, Georgetown and Wisconsin, which remarks that those Afro-American students that attend private schools, although their family purchasing power is not very high and due to this they have been able to achieve a grant, get better marks than those that are enrolled in public schools even though they come from the same social background.<sup>19</sup> This information makes us think that the Afro-American students’ academic training is not recognised or rewarded in public schools.

As far as the conclusions of the previous studies are concerned, there is no doubt that the segregation still remains in the educational institutions of the United States although it was abolished more than sixty years ago. It is difficult to imagine this situation if we take into account that the current President of the United States, Barack Obama, has African origins.

It is true that the current American government, as well as the former one, have made great efforts in order to integrate the Afro-American people in the educational system. An example of this hard work is the building of the “ Charter schools “, which are economically supported by the state but their management is independent; there are many Afro-American people that attend institutions of this type, creating a new sort of segregation unconsciously.

However, it is obvious that the educational equality still has to go further and there must be a determined conviction in order to finish with this inequality. Otherwise, the segregation in education and as a result in the other spheres of the American society will never come to an end.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a literate man said that if Afro-American people and white people had studied together, the Afro-Americans would have been exposed to a negative view by white people and as a result, they would have assumed this pessimism themselves turning into an enemy race to white people.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> “Escuelas de NY, con mayor segregación en el país”

<sup>19</sup> “Estados Unidos: los negros con cheque escolar obtiene mejores resultados académicos”

<sup>20</sup> “Las leyes de Jim Crow”

After having read all these pages, we can imagine the great discrimination that Afro-American people have suffered throughout the history of the United States. We can understand that after all these words and arguments, segregation cannot stop all of a sudden although the law says so.

But, above all, we must be aware that a social consciousness is necessary in order to finish with the great inequalities between white and black people. Otherwise, the segregation will continue to exist even though a few people have fought, fight and will fight to end with it. There is no doubt that Martin Luther King is the most well-known man in the Civil Rights movement. He fought in order to finish with segregation in the United States but in a pacific way since he was very young. His role was so important that he was awarded the Peace Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. Only four years later, Martin Luther King was killed. However, his battle to get the equality between black and white people is recorded even nowadays. These are his most famous words that he said in one of his speeches in 1963:

I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> White, Deborah

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