

Segregation in Mississippi in 1960

Goals

Students extract information from a map, a statistical table, and a photograph; synthesize their findings; and reach conclusions about the effects of state-sponsored segregation. This lesson could be paired with the lesson “Segregation in Milwaukee Today”(p. 43) to help students learn the difference between de jure and de facto segregation.

Central Questions

What was Jim Crow segregation like? How were Black people’s lives different from white people’s? What do maps, statistics, and images tell us about the past?

Background Information

Although slavery had ended 100 years earlier, African Americans in Mississippi had been kept in subjugation for decades through a system known as “Jim Crow.”

In 1964, state and local laws separated whites and Blacks in housing, jobs, schools, churches, playgrounds, and all other aspects of social life. These discriminatory policies meant that African Americans had the worst jobs, lowest pay, poorest schools, and harshest living conditions. Most Black Mississippians had less than a sixth-grade education and worked at menial jobs, such as field hands or maids. More than 90 percent of African Americans were barred from voting in local, state or national elections, even in places where African Americans constituted a majority of the residents.

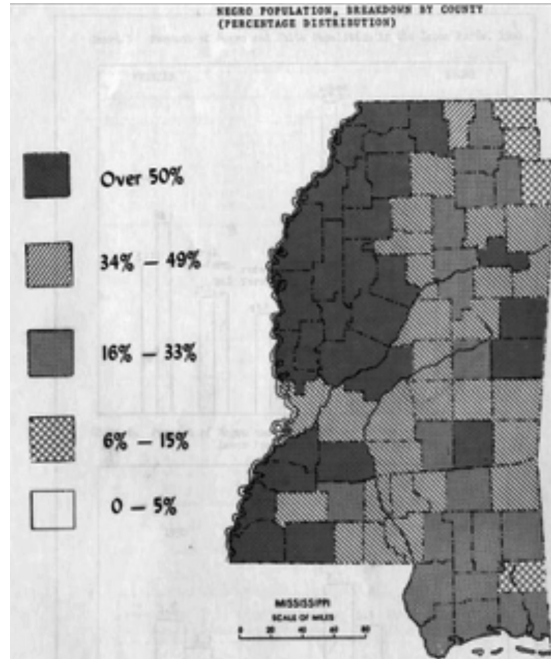
White supremacist politicians, police, and business leaders worked together to keep African Americans “in their place.” Black Mississippians who challenged the system were arrested and jailed, punished by white employers, or attacked by terrorist groups like the Ku Klux Klan. Some were even killed for trying to vote or improve their lives.

Some people called this institutionalized racism “the Southern way of life.” The law, the police, the courts, the church, the media, and the schools taught that Black people were dangerous and inferior to white people. Government officials at all levels deliberately passed laws to keep the races apart and keep control over African American people. This type of segregation is called de jure segregation, or segregation “by law.”

Documents Used in This Lesson:

1. Map of Mississippi population distribution by race in 1960.
<http://wihist.org/1rWxISS>
2. Tables of Mississippi occupations and income by race in 1960.
<http://wihist.org/1wn5ffw>
3. Photograph of an African American neighborhood in Natchez, Mississippi, 1965.
<http://wihist.org/1AdxATU>

Document 1: Map of Mississippi population distribution by race in 1960. <http://wihist.org/1rWxISS>



Document 2: Mississippi occupations and income by race in 1960. <http://wihist.org/1wn5ffw>

TABLE 14: INDUSTRY GROUPING OF EMPLOYED PERSONS, 1960 (PERCENTAGE) 17

INDUSTRY	NONWHITE				WHITE			
	State	Urban	Rural Non-farm	Rural Farm	State	Urban	Rural Non-farm	Rural Farm
Agriculture	34.9	3.1	36.0	76.5	12.8	1.2	8.4	47.1
Manufacturing	4.6	6.7	4.4	2.0	23.3	20.1	29.1	20.2
Wholesale trade	1.3	2.4	1.1	0.2	3.2	4.6	2.5	1.1
Mining	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.1	1.3	1.3	0.9	0.8
Transportation, Communications and other pub- lic utilities	4.0	3.6	3.3	1.5	4.8	6.1	3.3	2.8
Retail Trade	8.5	14.4	7.4	1.7	16.9	20.9	16.9	7.5
Service In- dustries	35.9	55.1	31.7	12.4	26.1	31.1	23.0	10.8
Industry not reported	2.1	2.6	1.9	1.5	1.9	2.2	1.7	1.8

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

TABLE 16: MEDIAN INCOME FOR PERSONS, 1950 AND 1960

RACE	1950			1960		
	State	Urban	Rural	State	Urban	Rural
White	\$1,236	\$1,826	\$973	\$2,023	\$2,622	\$1,065
Nonwhite	\$ 440	\$ 693	\$390	\$ 606	\$ 871	\$ 474

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

Questions

Documents 1 and 2: Map of population and tables of occupation and income by race, 1960.

With a partner, answer these questions. Discuss them afterward.

1. Examine the map of Mississippi. Where did most Black Mississippians live?
2. The western counties of the state, next to the Mississippi River, contained enormous cotton plantations owned mostly by white people but employing mostly Black tenant farmers. That region is called the Mississippi Delta. What kinds of jobs do you think were most common there?
3. Look at the first table. What types of jobs did most Black residents have? How about white residents?
4. Look at the second table. How much money did Black people make compared to white people? Express it as a percentage or a fraction.
5. Based on what you can learn from the map and tables, write five words that describe what life was like for Black Mississippians.

Document 3: Photo of African American neighborhood in Natchez, Mississippi, 1965.
<http://wihist.org/1AdxATU>



A caption on the back reads, “The city has no housing code and continues to ignore the slums of Natchez. No pavement, no streetlights, 10 outside flush toilets in 2 centrally located shanties shared by 114 people. The 125 persons living in this area share eight water faucets; of these 8, two are inside (installed by tenants) and 6 are outside.”

