

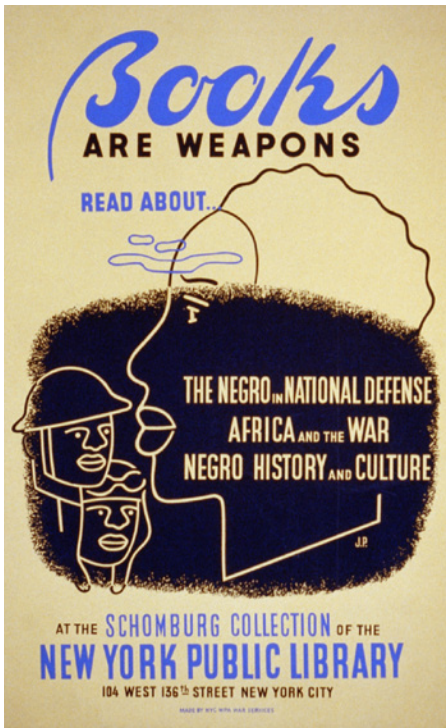


## 13. African Americans and the New Deal: *A Historic Realignment in American Politics*

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt broadcasting for a program, "My People," on WOL, a black radio station in Washington, DC, 1943. A committed proponent of racial justice, ER made frequent contact with black Americans—she met with African American leaders, visited black communities, and endorsed black-led projects and campaigns in her columns and speeches. She also brought African American leaders to the White House and helped them get the ear of the president.

When Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt moved into the White House, Washington, DC, was a segregated city. African Americans had held no senior positions in presidential administrations, and black and white federal employees ate in separate cafeterias. The Justice Department routinely rejected cases challenging racial discrimination and violence. Congress deferred to its senior southern members, powerful Democrats who insisted that segregationist states had the right to interpret and implement federal policy. Impediments to African American suffrage were many. Black Americans who could vote, voted Republican in a tradition reaching back to the Great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln.

Meanwhile, the Depression had hammered black people especially hard. Half of all urban African American workers had lost their jobs. Those who lived in rural America were in even more dire straits. Local relief agencies focused overwhelmingly on needy whites, leaving African Americans to rely on their already strapped churches and families. The collapsed farm economy cost many black farmers and tenant farmers their land. Lynchings and other attacks on African Americans escalated, a problem the Democratic-controlled Congress and Herbert Hoover's White House had refused to address. Blacks worried that FDR, a Democratic president with strong ties to



A World War II-era poster by the federal Works Projects Administration encouraging people to explore African American culture via a special collection of the New York Public Library. LOC

the South through his second home in Warm Springs, Georgia, would make their already hard lives worse.

In short, as historian Harvard Sitkoff has noted, “No ethnic group anticipated the inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt with less hope for a new deal than Afro-Americans; and none had less leverage with the president-elect.”

In time, many African Americans would be pleasantly surprised. Although early programs of the New Deal did ignore and sometimes aggravate their plight, by 1934 the New Deal began to address the discrimination local administrators imposed on its polices. Two years later, FDR actively courted the African American vote and shattered Jim Crow tradition by inviting African Americans to address the Democratic National Convention. It was only one of many gestures by both FDR and First Lady ER demonstrating their break with racist customs. Segregation still governed policies, but, pressured by ER and

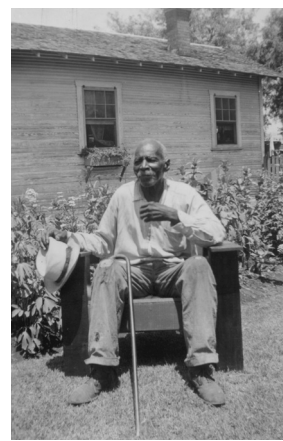
the socially progressive New Dealers Harold Ickes, Harry Hopkins, and Aubrey Williams, the New Deal tackled racial discrimination with more fervor than any administration since Reconstruction.

It was not an easy fight and it was filled with contradictions. While FDR refrained from championing anti-lynching legislation to keep southern Democrats in his political corner, he did speak out against this lawless, racially motivated violence—and the White House threw its full support behind campaigns to end the poll tax, whites-only primaries, and other efforts to disenfranchise African Americans across the South. The public-power-generating system of the Tennessee Valley Authority did not hire African Americans for construction work and subsistence homestead towns did not welcome them, but New Deal policies helped black mortgage holders save their homes from foreclosure and black tenant farmers and sharecroppers buy their own land. New Deal programs offered direct relief to millions of African Americans, put millions back to work, and restored thousands of African American schools. Much remained to be done, but no administration had done as much.

By the time the Roosevelts left the White House, African Americans, encouraged by FDR’s policies and ER’s special commitment to civil rights, had shifted their allegiance from the party of Lincoln to the party of FDR—an affiliation that holds to this day.



Mother and child in Little Rock, Arkansas, around 1937. LOC



William Green, formerly enslaved; in San Antonio, Texas, 1937. LOC



Eighty-two-year-old Mary Crane, born into slavery; in Mitchell, Indiana, around 1937. FDRL



Top: Children get water from the communal pump in Wilder, Tennessee, a town within the New Deal’s multidimensional development project known as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), 1942. Federal New Deal programs were subject to the racial biases of local administrators bent on steering benefits to whites. The TVA was a case in point. It became the foremost employer in the impoverished and underdeveloped Tennessee Valley, but sharply limited African Americans’ access to its training and jobs. FDRL

Below: In 1930s America, slavery was a living memory and what followed it—the institutionalized racism of Jim Crow segregation—was an everyday reality. Franklin D. Roosevelt brought African Americans into the Democratic Party by bringing a new spirit of inclusion and respect to the White House, along with policies that addressed the needs of “the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid.” These portraits were taken as part of an effort by the New Deal’s Federal Writers’ Project to collect oral histories from formerly enslaved Americans.

A

## The First One Hundred Days: “Negroes Run Around”

Franklin D. Roosevelt’s first major policies hurt African Americans more than they helped them. By excluding domestic and unskilled workers from wage and hour codes, the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) left the vast majority of African American workers at the mercy of their employers. When the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) paid farmers to take land out of cultivation, local administrators overlooked the act’s nondiscrimination clause, refused to distribute payments to African American

farmers, and allowed the overwhelming majority of white farmers who took the payments to deny tenant farmers and sharecroppers their proportionate share. As a result, hundreds of thousands of rural African Americans suddenly found themselves evicted from the lands they’d worked—homeless. The Civil Conservation Corps (CCC) did accept young African American men into its programs, though not at a rate equal to whites; it kept black crews in segregated camps, managed by white supervisors.

These policies did not mean that all New Dealers wanted to leave African Americans out of the New Deal. On the contrary, many prominent New Dealers had a history of opposing discrimination. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes had served as president of the Chicago chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and soon moved to integrate the Department of the Interior’s cafeteria. Federal Emergency Relief Administration

(FERA) head Harry Hopkins inserted a nondiscrimination clause in the draft relief legislation he prepared for Congress, making African Americans eligible for desperately needed relief payments at a time when they were unaccustomed to receiving any benefits at all from government. Eleanor Roosevelt began visiting and vocally making common cause with African American relief initiatives—an outspokenness for which the First Lady would receive multiple death threats.

Still, frustrated black leaders, convinced that FDR would continue to capitulate to the southerners who controlled congressional appropriations, argued that the New Deal was simply another “Raw Deal” for African Americans. The acronym “NRA” for the National Recovery Administration that oversaw wage and hour codes, they quipped, really stood for “Negroes Run Around.”

By 1934 things began to change.



Enrollees in one of the New Deal’s first jobs programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), study radio code at a camp in Kane, Pennsylvania, 1933. The CCC hired black workers but assigned them to segregated camps. FDRL

# B

## Relief and Inclusion

As the New Deal entered its second year, pressure from within and without the administration made Franklin D. Roosevelt and many New Dealers take stock of the way their policies affected African Americans.

Outside the White House, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and other civil rights organizations launched the most aggressive two-pronged strategy in their history. They pressured individual administrators to integrate African Americans more completely within New Deal programs, lobbying Eleanor Roosevelt to assist their efforts. Just as important, they led voter registration drives in nonsouthern, electoral-rich states (Illinois, California, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, for example) to develop, as civil rights scholar Harvard Sitkoff has written, “a relatively sizeable and volatile bloc that national politicians could no longer ignore.”

Once basic programs for industrial and agricultural recovery were in place—programs many African Americans saw as rankly discriminatory—the White House shifted its energy to relief, public works, and helping unemployed youth. With antisegregationists Harold Ickes and Harry Hopkins in control of relief policy, and Alabama-born civil rights proponent Aubrey Williams directing the New Deal youth programs, the New Deal began to attack the nation’s record of racial bias.

African Americans soon would fill almost 30 percent of the jobs created by Hopkins’s massive Works Progress Administration (WPA)—a blessedly welcome source of employment, since blacks were concentrated in low-paying farm and domestic work, and by 1935 more than a third of black families were just getting by on federal direct relief. Ickes would require Public Works Administration (PWA) building projects to include a specific percentage of skilled African American craftsmen. The Farm Security Administration would help fifty thousand black tenant farmers and sharecroppers buy their own farms.

A combination of New Deal programs rebuilt decrepit African American schools,

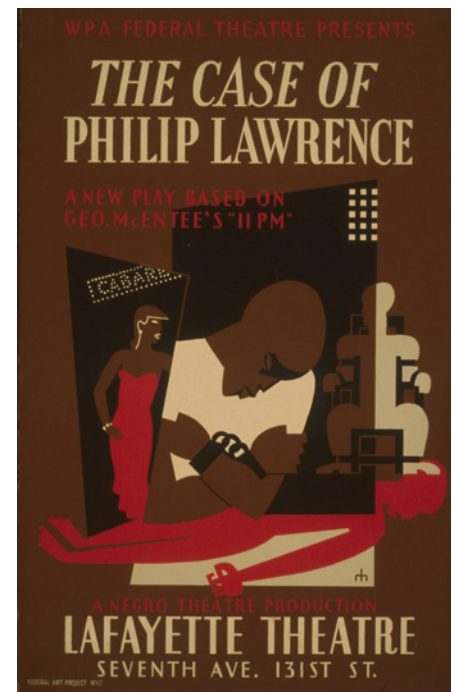
rehired their teachers, and taught more than three hundred thousand illiterate African Americans to read and write. The Federal Art Project employed thousands of black artists, musicians, writers, teachers, academics, and stagehands, and produced plays and concerts written and performed by African Americans. When the press or segregationists assailed these efforts, ER visited the programs and used her columns to praise their work. Goaded by ER’s insistent pressure, several White House officials joined her in actively supporting national campaigns to abolish the poll tax, which imposed unequal burdens on black voters, and the white primary, in which the Democratic Party excluded blacks from the primaries that effectively decided elections in the solidly Democratic South.



**Top:** WPA workers build road infrastructure while Michigan artist Alfred Castagne, also working for the WPA, sketches the scene; May 19, 1939. Black Americans were well represented in WPA work-relief jobs from laborer to literacy teacher to actor, although in most areas they were concentrated in lower-paying jobs. LOC

**Above:** A woman works on a Vengeance dive bomber in a Tennessee plant, February 1943. Establishing equal access for African Americans to jobs in the burgeoning 1940s defense industry was a major accomplishment of black civil rights activists and of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s presidency. It helped launch a large-scale migration of African Americans to cities of the North. LOC

By summer 1936, as Democrats assembled to renominate FDR, the president had begun to address African American concerns and win black supporters. He now dramatically broke with the Jim Crow protocol that had long guided the Democratic Convention, asking one African American pastor to deliver an invocation and another to second his nomination. FDR also refused to segregate the press box. South Carolina senator Ellison “Cotton Ed” Smith stalked out, defiantly telling all within earshot, “I cannot and will not be a party to the recognition of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments” (which had established citizenship and voting rights for emancipated slaves following the Civil War). When America voted on November 3, 1936, fully 71 percent of black voters, in a historic shift, passed over the party of Lincoln to vote for FDR.



A poster for a production of *The Case of Philip Lawrence* at a theater in Harlem, 1937. The play was a presentation of the federal Negro Theatre Project, which not only employed black actors, directors, and playwrights in nearly two dozen locations, but also treated themes reflecting African American experience. This play told the story of a college-educated black athlete who finds himself falsely accused of murder. LOC

# C

## African American Leadership: The “Black Cabinet”

Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed forty-five African Americans to administrative positions throughout the New Deal—a record number. When these leaders began to meet informally to discuss how to make the New Deal more responsive to African American issues, they called themselves the Federal Council of Negro Affairs. The press dubbed them the “Black Cabinet.”

The group’s power rested in its three champions: Mary McLeod Bethune, William H. Hastie, and Eleanor Roosevelt. Bethune, a self-made, nationally known educator who served as director of African American affairs for the National Youth Administration, chaired the meetings, which were often held in her home. Hastie, who served as assistant solicitor in the Department of the Interior, helped guide the group’s policy talks and worked closely with Bethune and Robert Weaver (Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes’s advisor on African American issues) to craft specific recommendations. Bethune then took these recommendations to ER, who would urge FDR to implement them.

Despite Bethune’s close friendship with ER—and ER’s insistent lobbying—FDR’s administration resisted more of the Black Cabinet’s causes than it supported. Yet, as the historian Nancy Weiss has noted, “The Black Cabinet was important to black people because it signified that the government was paying attention to them in ways that had never been the case before.” And the rest of America could see there was change afoot: African American activists and leaders had a path into the seat of power.



African American girls learn tennis in a recreational program of the National Youth Administration (NYA), 1936. With civil rights champion Aubrey Williams as its head and African American educator Mary McLeod Bethune its director of African American affairs, the NYA launched a special program in 1937 focusing on job-skills training for black youth. FDRL

## D Politics, Segregation, and Racial Violence

In the New Deal era, as historian Ira Katznelson has observed, southerners in Congress “held three trump cards: uncommon longevity, disproportionate numbers, and a commitment to racial hierarchy more passionate than their opponents.” More than any other regional coalition, they controlled Franklin D. Roosevelt’s legislative agenda.

In March 1933, southern Democrats held nearly half of all Senate and House seats. Although their power would decline slightly, at no time during FDR’s presidency would their hold on both chambers drop below 40 percent. These Democrats embraced economic progressivism, and they used their seniority to both amend and pass essential New Deal legislation. During the first one hundred days, for example, they collaborated closely with New Dealers to craft the National Industrial Recovery Act, the Agricultural Adjustment Act, the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the Emergency Banking Act.

But their enthusiasm for the New Deal was rivaled—perhaps even trumped—by their attachment to racial segregation and a form of home rule that adamantly resisted federal intervention in the brutal southern custom of lynching black people.

### *Lynch law*

Lynching—mob killings of targeted individuals for real or imagined wrongs—had declined gradually during the twentieth century but had also become far more race-specific. By the 1930s, “lynch law” was applied almost exclusively to African Americans, terrorizing black communities into compliance with white supremacist segregation. And the Depression brought a spike in these attacks.

In 1903 Theodore Roosevelt (Eleanor Roosevelt’s uncle) had become the first president to speak out about lynching. In late 1933, FDR broke a long silence on the subject from the presidential bully pulpit, telling the nation he considered lynching a “vile form



Authors of an antilynching bill, Senator Robert Wagner of New York and Senator Edward Costigan of Colorado, during a hearing on the bill in the Senate Judiciary Committee, February 1935. Antilynching bills were introduced in Congress repeatedly from the 1920s through the 1940s but none became law. The roadblock: southern senators who fought vociferously to keep the measures from coming to a vote. LOC

of collective murder . . . a deliberate and definite disobedience of the Commandment, ‘Thou shalt not kill.’” He even referred obliquely to the southern power brokers in Washington, DC, and in local communities who minimized the crime even if they didn’t take part in it: “We do not excuse those in high places or in low who condone lynch law,” he said.

But in the months that followed, FDR refused to support a bill, drafted by progressive senators Edward Costigan and Robert Wagner, that would have made lynching a federal crime and thus subject to unbiased federal prosecutions. FDR and his

team were focused elsewhere—on passing the Securities Exchange Act, energizing the Public Works Administration (PWA), and conceptualizing widespread work-relief projects. To accomplish these goals, they needed southern Democrats. When Wagner approached the president asking him to endorse the anti-lynching bill, FDR explained his dilemma. “I’ve got to get legislation passed by Congress to save America,” he said. “If I come out for the anti-lynching bill, [southerners in Congress] will block every bill I ask Congress to pass to keep America from collapsing. I just can’t take that risk.”

ER, who had lobbied women’s organizations to support the bill, continued to press FDR and even enlisted his mother in her efforts. The two women invited National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Executive Secretary Walter White to the White House for tea, hoping the three of them could persuade FDR to act. FDR told White the same thing he’d told Wagner. “I did not choose the tools with which I must work,” he said.

A senior class at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, before 1906. Franklin D. Roosevelt pointedly visited the black university in 1934, bypassing nearby all-white Vanderbilt University. The Fisk student body was in anguish over the lynching of an African American youth. The president’s visit to campus, coupled with his condemnation of the killing, made an impression on the community. LOC





The bill did not pass and FDR would not endorse subsequent versions. Southern senators would block a 1938 anti-lynching bill with a weeks-long filibuster, a process ER personally observed, looking on from the Senate gallery with withering disapproval. No one could mistake her point of view, and threats against her person increased.

### *The presidential bully pulpit*

Nor, indeed, was there any doubt in the country that the president himself opposed racial discrimination. He wouldn't butt heads with powerful senators when key legislation hung in the balance, but he did use the power of his office to condemn segregation and racial hatred in ways that would have shocked his predecessors.

In the fall of 1934, for example, FDR announced that on his way to Warm Springs, Georgia, he would stop in Tennessee and visit all-black Fisk University, a campus in turmoil over the mob murder some months earlier of a black youth named Cordie Cheek. A grand jury had refused to indict Cheek on charges that he had tried to attack an eleven-year-old white girl. Not long after he was released from jail, the young man's

body was found hanging from a cedar tree, having been shot and apparently dragged behind an automobile. FDR condemned the killing—and incensed many white supporters with his purposeful visit to Fisk. In order to get a glimpse of the beloved president with his long cigarette, pince-nez, and electrifying smile, they had to visit a black university and sit in unsegregated bleachers, no less. The Fisk student body president would recall how, being apprised of this arrangement, one white visitor said he'd voted the Democratic ticket all his life but never would again.

In '38, the same year southern senators blocked action on an anti-lynching bill, FDR and ER spurred the creation of the interracial Southern Conference for Human Welfare, which advocated for New Deal reforms and civil rights in the South. And in 1939, the president and First Lady defied the Daughters of the American Revolution, which had barred the black opera singer Marian Anderson from performing in its Constitution Hall, by arranging for Anderson to give an Easter Sunday concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, before an integrated crowd of seventy-five thousand.



**Left:** A flag announcing a lynching flies from the headquarters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) on Fifth Avenue in New York City, 1936. The NAACP, with the help of Eleanor Roosevelt, urged Franklin D. Roosevelt to help make lynching a federal crime. FDR condemned the practice as "a vile form of collective murder" but did not cross powerful southern Democrats by supporting an antilynching law. LOC

**Above:** Franklin D. Roosevelt and Eleanor Roosevelt used the visibility of the White House to make it clear where they stood on segregation. Here, members of FDR's cabinet and U.S. senators listen to celebrated black contralto Marian Anderson sing before a vast interracial audience on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, a 1939 concert arranged by activists—including the First Lady—after Anderson was barred from other venues because of her race. LOC

### *A voice in the Justice Department*

The year 1939 also saw the establishment by FDR's progressive attorney general Frank Murphy of a Civil Liberties Unit in the Department of Justice, designed to protect individuals—especially oppressed and vulnerable individuals—from violations of their rights as citizens. Safeguarding civil rights "is the American way," Murphy told a meeting of American mayors not long after creating the unit. "It is—this idea that liberty must be for all—the finest thing that America has given to civilization."

Renamed the Civil Rights Section in 1941, the special unit was staffed by just a handful of lawyers whose first job was to develop a legal rationale for federal prosecutions of civil liberties violations, including lynchings and other mob violence. In the early years, complaints poured in, with few cases reaching resolution. But the unit created an important precedent for a federal role in protecting the rights of the individual—a precursor to the Civil Rights Division created in 1957, which, in 1964, would investigate and win seven convictions in the infamous Ku Klux Klan murder of three civil rights workers in Philadelphia, Mississippi.

E

## Franklin D. Roosevelt, A. Philip Randolph, and America's War Effort

"Freedom is never granted; it is won. Justice is never given; it is exacted." So said the African American civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph in 1937. Randolph knew whereof he spoke. As leader of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, he had worked more than a decade to win a contract from the powerful Pullman Company, finally bringing its exploited African American train-car porters the prize they sought: better wages and working conditions.

In 1941, the country's factories cranking into high gear in preparation for war, Randolph would bring to bear these same tough-minded negotiating tactics in pressing a politely sympathetic but noncommittal Franklin D. Roosevelt to open the defense industry's high-paying jobs to black people.

It began in September 1940 with a meeting at the White House, orchestrated by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, in which Randolph and other black leaders asked the president to integrate the U.S. military and address race discrimination in the defense industry. Weeks passed, and the promised follow-up from the White House never came. So Randolph conceived a new method of persuasion that would become the very symbol of the civil rights movement: a March on Washington. By spring 1941, Randolph and other black leaders were predicting they could turn out a hundred thousand African Americans for the march, suggesting the marchers would stay in (all-white) Washington, DC, hotels.

The prospect alarmed FDR, who thought the demonstration might cast an unfortunate light on American condemnations of oppressive foreign governments—and might, in the worst-case scenario, lead to violence. Even ER wrote Randolph telling him she thought the march would be a mistake.

Randolph held his ground, a stand that took considerable courage given that he was pressing an administration considered



A. Philip Randolph, seated at center, and other leaders of the 1963 March on Washington, at the Lincoln Memorial. Also pictured are, from left to right, Mathew Ahmann, executive director of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice; Cleveland Robinson, labor official and administrative chair for the march; Rabbi Joachim Prinz, president of the American Jewish Congress; Joseph Rauh Jr., a Washington, DC, attorney and civil rights, peace, and union activist; John Lewis, chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; and Floyd McKissick, national chairman of the Congress of Racial Equality. National Archives

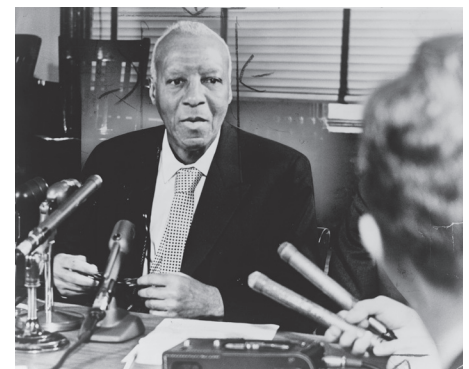
friendly to his cause. He wanted concrete action. And in a second meeting in June 1941, he got it. The president declined to integrate the military—his successor Harry Truman would do so in 1948—but promised to draft an executive order barring discrimination in war-related industries. Executive Order 8802, issued in early July, also created a commission to investigate complaints of discrimination. In exchange, Randolph called off the march.

By late 1942, as the country approached the first anniversary of its entry into the war, FDR was characterizing the hiring of African Americans in defense industries not so much as a question of social justice, but as "sound manpower policy" in a massive national effort that required all hands on deck. "In some communities," he said in a fireside chat in October, "employers dislike to employ women. In others they are reluctant to hire Negroes. In still others, older men are not wanted. We can no longer afford to indulge such prejudices or practices."

There remained plenty of racial discrimination in wages and assignments in the factories building the apparatus of World War II. But by the end of the war, African Americans held 8 percent of war-industry jobs, a number roughly proportionate to the population. Hundreds of thousands of African Americans would leave the South during the war years, many abandoning the paltry rewards of farm and domestic work for better-paying war-

related industrial jobs in the North and West. The Great Migration had begun.

Meanwhile, Randolph would endure as a key figure in the civil rights movement, meeting in 1963 with another president friendly to the cause—John F. Kennedy—who, like FDR, had strong misgivings about the plans black leaders presented for a mass demonstration in the nation's capital. The historic March on Washington finally took place on August 28, 1963. Randolph addressed the crowd of more than two hundred thousand. "We here today are only the first wave," he said.



A. Philip Randolph at a press conference in 1964. A veteran civil rights leader, he had pressed Franklin D. Roosevelt to ban discrimination in defense industry jobs and, more than twenty years later, organized the historic 1963 March on Washington. LOC



## F Supreme Court Appointments: The Road to *Brown*

Although Franklin D. Roosevelt lost his determined 1937 battle to reshape a Supreme Court that had thwarted New Deal programs, over the last eight years of his administration he was able to appoint an unprecedented eight judges to the nation's highest court. All of these judges but one (South Carolinian James Byrnes, who left the bench to direct the Office of Economic Stabilization) united to launch a decades-long attack on the legal doctrine justifying segregation.

FDR's first two appointments, Hugo Black and Stanley Reed, joined the court in 1937 and 1938. Together they helped form the majority in *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada*—a landmark desegregation case validating African American Lloyd Gaines's challenge to the University of Missouri Law School. The court ruled that since the state had no separate law school for blacks, excluding them from the university violated the Constitution's equal protection clause.

By 1941 Felix Frankfurter, William O. Douglas, and Frank Murphy had joined Black and Reed on the bench, creating the first court dominated by FDR appointees. Within a year, this bloc tackled discrimination in interstate transportation and primary elections.

On April 28, 1941, in *Mitchell v. the U.S.*, the Roosevelt court unanimously supported a suit brought by the only black member of Congress, Arthur Mitchell of Illinois, challenging enforcement of an 1891 Arkansas law that required separate cars for blacks on trains. The court deemed Mitchell's removal from the white car to be "manifestly a discrimination against him . . . based solely upon the fact that he was a Negro." The problem, according to the court, wasn't segregation (which would remain legal for years) but the inferiority of the Negro car to which Mitchell had been consigned; he had been denied "equality of accommodations."



All three cases served as strong precedents for legal attacks on segregation. In 1954, when the Supreme Court unanimously rejected "separate but equal" public schools for American children in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education*, five of the nine justices dismantling Jim Crow were FDR appointees.

By 1944 Robert H. Jackson and Wiley Rutledge had joined the court, and FDR had appointed Harlan Stone chief justice. On April 3 the court, in an eight-to-one decision, voted to reverse its 1935 unanimous support for the white primary, the southern segregationists' most effective political tool. All the Roosevelt justices united to rule that any political primary that excluded African American voters violated the Constitution's equal protection clause.

All three cases served as strong precedents for legal attacks on segregation. In 1954, when the Supreme Court unanimously rejected "separate but equal" public schools for American children in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education*, five of the nine justices dismantling Jim Crow were FDR appointees.



**Top:** Nettie Hunt and daughter Nikie on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court following its 1954 decision to strike down racial segregation in public schools. In the unanimous ruling, jurists not only called separate schools for black children "inherently unequal" but asserted this separation by race might "affect [the children's] hearts and minds in a way unlikely to ever be undone." Five of the nine justices handing down the historic ruling were appointees of Franklin D. Roosevelt. LOC

**Above:** First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt presents the Spingarn Medal, an award of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to famed opera singer Marian Anderson in 1939, not long after her Easter performance at the Lincoln Memorial struck a moral blow against segregation. While ER was reaching out to civil rights activists, Franklin D. Roosevelt was beginning to appoint judges to the Supreme Court who would help dismantle Jim Crow's legal framework. LOC