

## **Discrimination Against African Americans in Illinois**

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7th through 12th grades

### **Abstract:**

It is a common misunderstanding that Jim Crow and racial discrimination was purely a Southern phenomenon. While the North may not have toed the name Jim Crow, racial discrimination was common, especially as more African American migrants traveled North. Through this lesson, the students will learn about the structural racism that many African Americans faced in education, employment, housing, labor unions, medical care, and real estate.

Through this reality for most African Americans, students will get a glimpse of what life was like when the local, state, and federal government did not protect the rights of its citizens. They will also hear the accounts from people who had to live as second-class citizens.

### **Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings:**

1. How did racism permeate and affect different arenas of life for African Americans?
2. Why is there a misconception that racism is a Southern phenomenon?
3. What were the different attitudes that existed during this time period about African Americans? How have things changed? How have things remained the same?
4. How did African Americans fight back when they were under a system that treated them as second-class citizens?
5. Why is a person's perspective so important when looking at history?
6. Why do differences in people groups cause so much strain in a society?
7. Can individuals and groups in a society learn to coexist with one another equally when there are both majority and minority groups?

### **Assessment:**

#### Pre Assessment:

Students will write about a time where they experienced discrimination. What happened? Why did it happen? How did it make them feel?

This discrimination could be based on race, age, physical characteristics, language, etc.

Having students think about and being able to recall memories or events where they felt someone else's bias is an important part in helping them become more empathic to events and people throughout history.

#### Formative Assessment:

Complete the Inquiry Chart using the guiding questions provided as they review the resources.

#### Summative Assessment:

Students will answer the question below using the Inquiry Chart and references from the resources.

Question:

- In what areas of life did African Americans experience discrimination? How did this discrimination affect their quality of life? How was discriminatory practices supported by the government and outlawed by the law at the same time? Why do you think after all this evidence was presented through these hearings, no major legislation or changes occurred in Illinois?

### **Setting the Purpose:**

For post-modern students, experience is everything. How one feels and interprets life is very important compared to being told what to think or believe. However, when students do not understand or do not have a historical context to our current realities, misunderstandings arise that can hinder one's life and thinking.

Therefore, it is important to think about how discrimination permeated society and how people felt and had to endure under a system that racially discriminated against them in all arenas of life.

Empathic concern needs to be fostered in students in order to help them understand other's perspectives, especially when they are contrary to our own.

### **Analysis of primary sources**

Students will look at local resources from the Illinois State Archives pertaining to a commission that was set up to look into the condition of the urban colored population. The transcripts from the hearings that were held from 1939 though 1941 to investigate living condition will be analyzed as a primary source in order to understand how African Americans lived in the state of Illinois.

### **Lesson Plan**

1. Students will read the [background information](#) in order to understand the purpose of the hearings. They will read the statement by state Senator William A. Wallace in order to have the context necessary to analyze the resources provided.
2. Then students will take the pre-assessment and discuss their writings with others.
  - Pre Assessment:
    - Students will write about a time where they experienced discrimination. What happened? Why did it happen? How did it make them feel?
    - This discrimination could be based on race, age, physical characteristics, language, etc.

- Having students think about and being able to recall memories or events where they felt someone else's bias is an important part in helping them become more empathic to events throughout history.
3. After a discussion is held on Senator Wallace's statement and how individuals in the classroom have experienced discrimination, have students look through the different primary sources answering the guiding questions in the [Inquiry Chart](#).

[Education](#)  
[Employment](#)  
[Housing](#)  
[Labor Unions](#)  
[Medical Care](#)  
[Real Estate](#)

4. After students complete the chart and discuss it with one another, have students take the summative assessment.

- Summative Assessment:
  - Students will answer the question below using the Inquiry Chart and references from the resources.
- Question:
  - In what areas of life did African Americans experience discrimination? How did this discrimination affect their quality of life? How was discriminatory practices supported by the government and outlawed by the law at the same time? Why do you think after all this evidence was presented through these hearings, no major legislation or changes occurred in Illinois?

### **Annotated List of Materials and Resources**

[Background Information](#)

[Inquiry Chart](#)

[Education](#)

[Employment](#)

[Housing](#)

[Labor Unions](#)

[Medical Care](#)

[Real Estate](#)