

## WATERSHED MOMENTS IN RACE AND WEALTH

**1790**

### **Naturalization Act**

Provided the first rules for granting national citizenship in the United States. The law excluded Indigenous people, indentured servants, enslaved and free Black people, and Asians.

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**1848**

### **Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo**

While the Mexican-American War transferred territorial control in what is now the Southwestern United States, this treaty also gave Mexican citizens one year to choose between U.S. or Mexican citizenship. It produced legal implications for people of mixed ancestry and definitions of “Whiteness” that both opened and closed doors to full citizenship, depending on the moment.

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**1857**

### ***Dred Scott Decision***

The U.S. Supreme Court decided that no Black person, free or enslaved, could claim U.S. citizenship, and therefore Black people were unable to petition the court for their freedom.

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## 1924

### Indian Citizenship Act

As dual citizens of their tribes and the United States, members of federally recognized tribes were granted the right to register and participate in both nontribal (U.S.) elections and tribal elections. Still, some states prevented voting and forced litigation.

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## 1865–1870

### 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments

These amendments abolished slavery, granted citizenship to Black people and permitted Black men the right to vote. In the ensuing decades, various discriminatory practices, including poll taxes and literacy tests—along with intimidation and outright violence—were used to prevent Black adults from exercising their right to vote.

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**1896**

## ***Plessy v. Ferguson***

The Supreme Court established the “separate but equal” doctrine with this decision. This law enabled the expansion of growing segregation or “Jim Crow” practices across America, with many states codifying segregation in state constitutions, and local laws and ordinances. Jim Crow laws mandated racial segregation in all public facilities, public education and transportation, including segregated cars on interstate trains and, later, buses. This body of law institutionalized a number of economic, educational and social disadvantages for Black Americans.

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## 1954

### ***Brown v. Board of Education***

The Supreme Court declared state laws establishing separate public schools for Black and White students to be unconstitutional. The decision effectively overturned the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896, which allowed state-sponsored segregation, insofar as it applied to public education.

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## 1963

### March on Washington

Also known as the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, this massive protest march occurred in August 1963, when 250,000 people gathered in front of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. The pivotal event drew attention to economic inequalities faced by Black people a century after emancipation, and demanded a new federal jobs program, a higher minimum wage and more reforms.



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## 1964 Civil Rights Act

This landmark civil rights and U.S. labor law outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex or national origin. It also prohibited unequal application of voter registration requirements, and racial segregation in schools, employment and public accommodations.

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## 2013

### Black Lives Matter

The movement began with the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media after the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the shooting death of Black teen Trayvon Martin.

The movement campaigns against violence and systemic racism toward Black people.

The Black Lives Matter movement supports economic justice for all, including a restructuring of tax codes, a federal and state jobs program, the right for workers to organize and other protections for workers.

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**1850**

## **Foreign Miners Tax**

The act stated that all miners in the state of California who were not citizens of the United States had to pay a monthly fee of \$20 (equivalent to \$600 today).

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**1882**

## **Chinese Exclusion Act**

The first federal immigration law suspended Chinese immigration for 10 years and barred Chinese in the United States from citizenship.

The act was the first law implemented to prevent a specific ethnic group from immigrating to the United States.

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## 1924

### Immigration Act of 1924

This legislation limited the annual number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2% of the number of people from that country who already were living in the United States in 1890. Based on surnames and not the census figures, 82% of all immigrants allowed in the country came from Western and Northern Europe, 16% from Southern and Eastern Europe, and only 2% from the rest of the world. The act effectively ended the era of mass immigration into New York City.

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## 1942

### **Bracero Program**

This government program led to millions of Mexican men migrating to the United States to work on short-term, low-wage agricultural labor contracts. Between the 1940s and mid-1950s, farm wages dropped sharply as a percentage of manufacturing wages—a result, in part, of the use of *braceros* and undocumented laborers who lacked full rights in American society. Once their labor was no longer needed in the United States, the Mexicans who participated in the *Bracero* Program were forced to return to their homeland.

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## 1965

### Immigration and Nationality Act

This expansive piece of legislation abolished the quota system based on national origins that had been American immigration policy since the 1920s. The 1965 act marked a change from U.S. policy that had discriminated against people outside of Northern Europe.

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## 1993 NAFTA

The North American Free Trade Agreement signed by Canada, Mexico and the United States created a trilateral trade bloc in North America. The agreement displaced more than 850,000 U.S. jobs, most of which were in manufacturing. It also displaced Mexican corn farmers, leading to an increase in Mexican immigration to the United States.



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## 2001 USA PATRIOT Act

This law amended the Immigration and Nationality Act to broaden the scope of people ineligible for admission or deportable due to perceived terrorist activities. The act unfairly targeted Arab, South Asian and Muslim communities—many of them immigrants—with its surveillance and enforcement efforts.

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### 1825

### Eminent Domain—Seneca Village

Founded in 1825, more than 350 people lived in Seneca Village, the first free Black community in New York City. It grew to become a middle-class area complete with homes, churches, schools and cemeteries. When the development of Central Park was taking place, newspapers and politicians referred to the village as a “shantytown” and called its inhabitants “squatters” and “scoundrels.” In 1857, the city used eminent domain to forcibly remove all residents and destroy the property to build Central Park.

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## 1830

### Indian Removal Act

After discovering gold in Georgia, President Andrew Jackson pressured Congress to find a way to reverse previous laws (Northwest Ordinances) so he could designate parcels of land west of the Mississippi River as new Indian Territories. During the debate, Indigenous tribes were not consulted. Almost all of the 100,000 Indigenous people in the Northeast and Southeast migrated westward, either voluntarily or by military force. The approximately 85,000 people who survived this perilous journey referred to it as the Trail of Tears (English translation).

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## 1862

### Homestead Acts

After forced removal of Indigenous peoples, these laws made it possible for millions of acres west of the Mississippi to be given away to mostly White “homesteaders.” In all, more than 270 million acres (10% of the total land area of the United States) of what had been “Indian Territory” were converted to private hands. Indigenous families, of course, were mostly displaced.

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## 1919

### ‘The Red Summer’

Twenty-six documented riots occurred, where Black communities across the country were attacked by White people. Riots in cities such as Charleston, South Carolina; Chicago; Houston; Omaha, Nebraska; Tulsa, Oklahoma; and Washington, D.C., resulted from a variety of postwar social tensions and competition for jobs and housing between ethnic White and Black people.

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## 1934

### National Housing Act of 1934

Passed during the Great Depression in order to make housing and home mortgages more affordable, the act established the Federal Housing Administration, which used redlining, a practice of denying or limiting financial services to certain neighborhoods based on racial or ethnic composition. This resulted in a large increase in residential racial segregation in the United States.

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## 2007

### Subprime Mortgage Crisis

A nationwide banking emergency occurring between 2007–2010 contributed to the U.S. recession of December 2007–June 2009. It was triggered by a large decline in home prices after the collapse of a housing bubble, leading to mortgage delinquencies and foreclosures. Banks steered BIPOC borrowers into subprime mortgages more often than White borrowers—therefore, BIPOC communities were disproportionately impacted by the housing collapse.

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## 1935

### National Labor Relations Act

Cited as a landmark law for the labor movement, the NLRA guaranteed basic rights of private sector employees to organize into trade unions, engage in collective bargaining for better terms and conditions at work, and take collective action, including strike. Agricultural and domestic employees, however, were excluded from the act, which meant many Black and Latino workers were excluded from the benefits and protections made available to most White workers.



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## 1943

### First 'Right to Work' Law Passed

Under “right to work” laws, employees in unionized workplaces may not be compelled to join a union, nor compelled to pay for any part of the cost of union representation, while still receiving the same benefits as union members who do contribute. Right to work laws have racist roots. They were founded by a Texas businessman and white supremacist who hated unions, in part, because they promoted solidarity of workers across racial lines. Today, 26 states have right to work laws on the books.

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## 1968

### Memphis Sanitation Strike

Following years of poor pay and dangerous working conditions, more than 700 of the 1,300 Black sanitation workers in Memphis met on Sunday, Feb. 11, 1968, and agreed to strike.

The mayor initially declared the strike illegal and refused to meet with local Black leaders.

The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. took place April 4, 1968, at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, where King had traveled in support of the sanitation workers' strike. The strike ended on April 16, 1968, with a settlement that included union recognition and wage increases.

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## 2017

### Tax Cuts and Jobs Act

This \$1.5 trillion law gave corporations a massive permanent tax break and temporarily cut tax rates for individuals. The massive tax cuts for corporations and businesses disproportionately benefit the wealthy. Since BIPOC communities have lower rates of corporate stock ownership and business income, they benefit less from the tax cuts. Additionally, federal revenues are not available to fund the health care, child care and education programs working families depend on.

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**1855**

### **California Anti-Vagrancy Act**

On the heels of the Gold Rush, this law targeted Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Its definition of vagrant included all those who did not have or accept employment, prostitutes and drunkards, and called for their incarceration for up to 90 days. During that time, they could be sentenced to hard labor.

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## 1865 Black Codes

After the Civil War ended in 1865, some states passed laws that restricted the jobs Black people could hold and their ability to leave a job once hired. Unemployed Black people could be arrested and imprisoned under “vagrancy” laws.

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## 1980

### War on Drugs

A government-led initiative that aimed to stop illegal drug use, distribution and trade by increasing and enforcing penalties for offenders. The campaign's impact on BIPOC communities, particularly Black people, has been criticized for having racist objectives. Although Black communities aren't more likely to use or sell drugs, Black people are much more likely to be arrested and incarcerated for drug offenses.

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### 1994 Crime Bill

This lengthy crime control bill was put together over the course of six years. Its provisions implemented many things, including a “three strikes” mandatory life sentence for repeat offenders, money to hire 100,000 new police officers, \$9.7 billion in funding for prisons, and an expansion of death penalty-eligible offenses. The crime bill contributed to mass incarceration, which hits BIPOC communities particularly hard. Today, 1 in 3 Black men and 1 in 6 Latino men are incarcerated in their lifetimes, compared with 1 in 17 White males.