

African Americans During the Great Depression



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SCCAAS

In the South Carolina Standards

❖ Covered in elementary, middle and high school curricula.

❖ Elementary: 5-4.2, 5-4.3

- Summarize the causes of the Great Depression, including overproduction and declining purchasing power, the bursting of the stock market bubble in 1929, and the resulting unemployment, failed economic institutions; and the effects of the Dust Bowl.
- Explain the American government's response to the Great Depression in the New Deal policies of President Franklin Roosevelt, including the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, the Securities and Exchange Commission, and the Social Security Act.

❖ Middle: 7-4.3, 8-6.4

- Explain the causes and effects of the worldwide depression that took place in the 1930s, including the effects of the economic crash of 1929.
- Explain the effects of the Great Depression and the lasting impact of the New Deal on people and programs in South Carolina, including James F. Byrnes and Mary McLeod Bethune, the Rural Electrification Act, the general textile strike of 1934, the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration, the Public Works Administration, the Social Security Act, and the Santee Cooper electricity project.



In the South Carolina Standards Cont'd

- ❖ USHC-6.3
 - Explain the causes and consequences of the Great Depression, including the disparities in income and wealth distribution; the collapse of the farm economy and the effects of the Dust Bowl; limited governmental regulation; taxes, investment; and stock market speculation; policies government and the Federal Reserve System; and the effects of the Depression on the people.

Origins & Causes

- ❖ Extreme wealth inequalities
- ❖ Ballooning stock market
- ❖ Over reliance on unprotected loans
- ❖ Too much speculation & borrowing
- ❖ Overproduction and uneven distribution capabilities
- ❖ Stock Market crash was a symptom
- ❖ Banks lacked money, people lost savings, debts were called in, no cash
- ❖ Production stopped, workers fired, no \$, consumption declined, no profits, more workers fired

Document Analysis

- ❖ You will be shown three historical documents. Analyze each document then respond to the questions below.
- ❖ Document 1
 - According to the documents, when did cotton prices begin to fall in the South?
 - What does this suggest about the impending recession?
- ❖ Document 2
 - How does the article and testimony exemplify the struggles of African Americans in urban areas?
- ❖ Document 3
 - Predict the outcome of black owned businesses and owners like the Binga State Bank in Chicago.

[Document Link](#)

Impact

❖ Rural Life

- Cotton prices fell from \$.18 to \$.06 per pound
- Tenant farmers faced starvation; thrown off land

❖ Urban Life

- White competition for jobs
- “The Bronx Slave Market” - Black domestic workers

❖ Black Businesses

- Suffered decline disproportionate to counterparts
- Binga Bank (Chicago’s 1st Black-owned bank) - Owner sentenced to prison after bank failure
- Life Insurance companies survived the plight

Document Analysis

- ❖ In this segment you will view two documents. Analyze each document then respond to the question below.
- ❖ Document 4
 - What does this document say about the resourcefulness of Black Americans during the Great Depression?

[Document Link](#)

Ingenuity

- ❖ Blacks turned to family and community for survival
 - Shared housing
 - Barter and exchange of basic household goods and food
 - “Letting out” sleeping space
 - Matilda A. Evans (Columbia, SC) convinced state to provide free immunizations to school children
 - Columbia Clinic - short-lived but powerful lesson to motivate and achieve change

Black Protest

- ❖ The disparity exacerbated by the Great Depression galvanized African American interests groups to strengthen the fight for equal treatment.
- ❖ NAACP took on the gov't policies of discrimination in gov't programs
 - Charles Hamilton Houston, Thurgood Marshall
 - *Gaines v. Canada* - court ordered state of MO to allow blacks to study in state-sponsored schools
 - Began to challenge the constitutionality of “separate but equal”
- ❖ Du Bois criticized NAACP for emphasis on desegregation
 - Promoted separate Black economy “an economic nation within a nation” and self-reliance
- ❖ Women's Groups
 - Juanita Jackson founds City-Wide Young People's Forum in Baltimore
 - Ella Baker co-founder of Young Negroes' Cooperative League in Harlem

Document Analysis

- ❖ In this segment you will view several documents. Analyze each document then respond to the question below.
- ❖ Documents 5 and 6
 - Was it necessary to employ the individuals pictured to reach out to African Americans? Why or why not?
- ❖ Documents 7, 8 and 9
 - Identify disparities in the images?
 - Based on the documentation, how was the CCC impactful for African Americans?
- ❖ Document 10
 - In what ways do you think African American participation contributed to this success?

[Document Link](#)

African Americans in the New Deal

- ❖ Local Relief
 - characterized by discrimination
- ❖ FERA (Federal Emergency Relief Act)
 - included programs such as CCC, PWA, CWA
 - African Americans were able to participate in these programs despite some discriminatory practices
- ❖ CCC - put Americans to work to remove them from poverty
 - 25% - 40% of African Americans were on relief rolls and received benefits at a higher rate than whites based on the levels of devastation

African Americans in the New Deal cont'd

❖ Roosevelt's "Black Cabinet"

- Federal Council on Negro Affairs
- Roosevelt's administration hired African Americans to specialize and facilitate change
- Mary McLeod Bethune leader of group and in charge of National Youth Administration

❖ 2nd New Deal

- SSA, NLRA, WPA
- Helped to shift African American political allegiance from Republican (Party of Lincoln) to Democrat
- FDR wins election of 1936

Questions???