

Henrietta Lacks Lesson  
Volume 1



Segregation and the Complicated Legacy of Henrietta Lacks



## Cover

Portrait of Henrietta Lacks by Kadir Nelson/Smithsonian

## Foreword

What we say is that she was good during her living days and she's still good in her dying days. My grandmother may have passed, but she's still helping people. That's the kind of person that she was. But, for many years, we knew very little about her. We had a picture of a good looking young woman, well dressed and beaming, but we were missing the stories to make her real. It was only with the publication of *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* that I really met my grandmother. I learned about my grandmother at the same time that I learned about the HeLa cells and the controversy that surrounded them. With all the questions that the HeLa cells created, and the confusing and painful relationship that the family had with researchers who would come to take samples and leave empty promises to bring back answers, in a way, without them, I would still not know my grandmother.

Henrietta always made sure that everybody was taken care of and her story hasn't ended. She continues to contribute to the world through her cells and we, her kids and grandkids, are doing what we can to walk beside her. We keep her story alive, so others can remember and learn from it, and we use this story as a platform to advocate for a diverse collection of other important issues, such as patient rights, consent, disease prevention, and health disparities. My brother goes around talking about the importance of participating in clinical trials. There remains so much distrust in the African American community toward the medical establishment, but being represented in these studies is an important step in making sure that medical breakthroughs also work for us. My cousin has the Henrietta Lacks House of Healing, a place to help previously incarcerated men and women successfully transition back into the community. It's important to us to bring awareness and to make sure that everyone is given the opportunity to take care of their health.

At the root of it, this is an issue of ownership and control over your own information. My brother is involved with the HeLa Genome Data Access Working Group, which reviews requests by research groups seeking access to the HeLa genome. It is important to him that the family have a say in how this resource, our grandmother, is used by others (universities, government laboratories, companies, etc.). For me, it's more about the personal side. I tell my grandmother's story and try to help where I can, where it comes to educating the public about health disparities and disease prevention. Our experience has made me more vigilant: when I go to the doctor, or when I take my mother to the doctor, I'm much more proactive about asking questions, looking up information about the treatment they recommend, making sure that things are not overlooked. These practices are steps that we can all take to protect our bodies and our health.

When I think about Henrietta's story and legacy, two words come to mind: "hope" and "everlasting." When I see all the ways that the HeLa cells have helped people, through discoveries that have made in vitro fertilization possible, or vaccines, or cancer treatments, I see hope. Hope for people and hope for the future. An important part of this story is compassion. When I tell Henrietta's story, I want people to remember that this was an African American woman with limited education and limited income. The difference she has made is tremendous, but the way she and her family were treated was regrettable. I hope students realize that this could have happened to anyone – their parent, their grandparent, themselves. We should show compassion to the people we meet and the people around us. Henrietta didn't choose this, but this is all part of her story now. I hope she never stops doing good and helping people. That is who she is. This is my grandmother.

*by Jeri Lacks-Whye*

## Curriculum Introduction

In 1951, a young woman sparked a scientific revolution. Unfortunately, she would neither know about it nor benefit from it. For many decades, we would not even know her name. The life of this young woman, Henrietta Lacks, was cut short by the ravages of a rapidly advancing cancer colonizing her body. As the cancer was quickly killing Henrietta, a piece of her tumor was isolated and grown in a test tube. As it happened, the traits that made her cancer cells grow so rapidly also granted them the unusual ability to grow rapidly under artificial laboratory conditions outside of her body and without dying; a scientific phenomenon at the time. A new world of scientific tools was suddenly available to researchers. However, the life of Henrietta Lacks is part of a larger and more complex story. Despite the fact that her disease was of great scientific benefit, her story is not confined to this terrible and terminal experience.

In many ways, Henrietta Lacks' story is the story of early 20th century America for African Americans; a story of struggle, inequality, segregation, and racism in our history. Henrietta Lacks was a young African American woman who grew up in Virginia during the Jim Crow era. Having hoped to emerge from slavery into some semblance of freedom, many African Americans in the South at the end of the 19th century found themselves thrust into a new form of bondage as sharecroppers and in perennial debt to white landowners. In order to improve her family's prospects, she moved with her husband and two young children to Baltimore to begin a new, and hopefully, better life. While the move did not take her out of the South, it did transport her from life on a tobacco farm in rural Virginia to a booming industrial port city. In these details, Henrietta's life was reminiscent of the struggles and displacement of countless other African Americans in the United States at that time. Many African Americans during this time period began leaving the rural South in favor of Northern urban centers, dramatically changing the social landscape of the United States.

Even at the end of her life, Henrietta's experiences illuminate the details of life as an African American and as an African American woman, as well as the realities of science and medicine in Baltimore for people of color at that time. Henrietta Lacks was diagnosed with an aggressive cervical cancer, for which she accepted treatment at the time was the implantation of vials of radioactive material within the cervix. While this treatment was the current medical standard of care, the fact that Henrietta had to receive this treatment in a segregated ward at Johns Hopkins University Hospital was not out of medical necessity. These trappings of segregation were the outward expressions of a mindset that has been a part of the American experience since its inception; and, indeed, the United States is not the only place in which these prejudices have made a home. However, the intersection of racism with science and medicine is particularly insidious. This intersection gave implicit license to doctors conducting unethical studies on unsuspecting African American patients in Alabama, in what would be called the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, as well as a litany of other inexcusable incidents that have tarnished the image of the scientific and medical establishments over the decades. Several years before Henrietta's death, in response to the horrific exploits of Nazi doctors during the Second World War, the Nuremberg Laws codified a handful of basic tenets of medical ethics. The first of these tenets requires patient consent before an experiment or procedure is carried out. Less than ten years after these laws were in place, Henrietta's cells were isolated, grown, and disseminated around the world without her consent or knowledge.

Despite the manner in which Henrietta's cells were obtained and propagated, the scientific advances attributed to her cells cannot be understated and also comprise part of the lasting legacy she leaves behind. The cancer cells that tormented Henrietta in life and were fashioned into tools of biomedical science after her death have allowed us to better understand cancer, discover and produce vaccines, and understand basic details of the inner workings of the cell. Furthermore, they have allowed the establishment of countless other cell lines, which are indispensable in the modern study of human health and disease.

This curriculum will explore a variety of topics that interconnect through Henrietta's life and experiences and will highlight the importance of these topics to our current understanding of science and society. Students and teachers will explore how prejudices impact individuals and societies, directly and indirectly, as well as attempt to understand Henrietta's personal experiences as she moved away from Virginia. Henrietta died of an aggressive form of cervical cancer and students will be guided through an exploration of our current understanding of how cancer comes about and may be treated. Years after the original diagnosis, scientists identified human papillomavirus (HPV) living within Henrietta's cells and this virus may have been responsible for making her disease more aggressive. Students will explore our current understanding of the link between HPV and cancer.

HeLa cells, as Henrietta's cells have been dubbed, are sometimes referred to as her immortal life; the physical part of her that will continue to live forever. However, Henrietta's true immortality is achieved through memory. She is immortal in that her name is on the lips of every student in a biology class, every scientist and doctor who wishes to save or improve a life, every social scientist who aims to learn from our past to fashion a better future. It is said that he who saves one life, it is as if he had saved the entire world. Henrietta has saved countless lives, and she is not done quite yet.

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## Introduction

The assertion that we are “All Created Equal” was considered so incontrovertible that it was enshrined in our most revered founding document, the Declaration of Independence. While this sentiment formed the bedrock of our nation, history has proven this aspiration to be a hard-won victory, and often a slow and arduous process, for many among us. How does our society decide who is worthy of this equality and how do these perceptions change, or fail to change, during history? What obstacles and misconceptions did our parents and grandparents encounter? Did their nationality play a part? Their ethnicity? Their race? Their gender? How did these challenges define them (and us) and how did they shape their successes and failures? How should we acknowledge the people who were made to sacrifice in the construction of this nation, but were often unable to reap the fruits of their sacrifices? Should we even try?

This unit will explore these questions through the lens of the experiences of Henrietta Lacks: a young African American woman from Virginia who moved to Maryland during segregation, hoping to improve the lives of her husband and children. African Americans traveling from Southern states to points North defined the Great Migration of the first half of the 20th century. This population shift not only affected the men and women who uprooted themselves to seek new and better lives far from home, but also changed the face of the United States of America: workforce drained out of Southern agriculture as Northern cities saw a tremendous influx of African American transplants. This flow of laborers was essential for Northern industry, as increased production for one war after another coincided with the loss of local manpower to the front lines abroad. This unit will explore this period in American history with an emphasis on critical reading of primary and secondary sources, encouraging students to be conscientious consumers of information.

# Segregation and the Complicated Legacy of Henrietta Lacks

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## Time

This lesson is expected to take 145 to 155 minutes, or two classes of 80 minutes each.

## Key Concepts

This 9-12 grade inquiry provides students with an opportunity to explore the impact segregation had on Henrietta's life and how that impact led to a complicated legacy of Henrietta Lacks through an examination of primary and secondary source documents. This query takes advantage of the complexity of the African American experience in the United States from the 1920s to the present. Students' understanding about segregation, mistreatment, and immortality will be further studied to understand the impact of Henrietta Lacks and her HeLa cells on society.

## Learning Objectives

After completing this lesson, students will:

- Analyze the Great Migration and how it impacted African American families
- Analyze historical sources of the Jim Crow era in order to understand segregation and its impact on American society
- Formulate an argument about whether society should compensate the Lacks family for Henrietta Lacks' sacrifice

## C3/CCSS Standards

*This lesson addresses the College, Career, and Civic Life C3 Social Studies Framework Standards for Social Studies standards for Civics, related to Civic and Political Institutions and for History, specifically Change, Continuity, and Context, Perspectives, Historical Sources and Evidence, and Causation and Argumentation. The lesson addresses these performance expectations:*

D2.Civ.3.9-12. Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements on the maintenance of national and international order.

D2.Civ.5.9-12. Evaluate citizens' and institutions' effectiveness in addressing social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level.

D2.His.1.9-12. Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts

D2.His.4.9-12. Analyze complex and interacting factors that influenced the perspectives of people during different historical eras

D2.His.9.9-12. Analyze the relationship between historical sources and the secondary interpretations made from them.

D2.His.15.9-12. Distinguish between long-term causes and triggering events in developing a historical argument.

*This lesson addresses the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Grades 6-12 Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, & Technical Subjects, specifically Key Ideas and Details and Integration of Knowledge and Ideas. The lesson addresses these performance expectations:*

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.1 - Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.2 - Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary



source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.3 - Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain. CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.7 - Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.8 - Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.11-12.9 - Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

## Prerequisite Knowledge

Students should know that Henrietta Lacks was an African American woman, who lived during the era of segregation, from 1920 – 1951. They should also know that her cancer cells, taken without her consent, created the HeLa cell line, which has contributed to many medical advances.

## Materials and Handouts

For the Teacher:

- Lesson Powerpoint
- Teacher Resource Sheet #1: Act Like a Historian Key
- Teacher Resource Sheet #2: Authentic Diary/Journal Entry for Henrietta Lacks Key

For the Student:

- Student Resource Sheet #1: The Great Migration of Afro-Americans, 1915 – 1940
- Student Resource Sheet #2: Act Like a Historian
- Student Resource Sheet #3: Authentic Diary/Journal Entry for Henrietta Lacks
- Student Resource Sheet #4: Source Packet A
- Student Resource Sheet #5: Source Packet B
- Student Resource Sheet #6: Source Packet C
- Student Resource Sheet #7: Source Packet D
- Student Resource Sheet #8: Source Packet E
- Student Resource Sheet #9: Source Packet F
- Student Resource Sheet #10: Source Packet G
- Student Resource Sheet #11: Source Packet H

## Procedure: Introduction Activity (20 minutes)

1. Project the following quote (Powerpoint Slide #2): *“The years after the Civil War were hopeful and disheartening for African Americans. With the end of slavery, they had hoped to attain full citizenship. Instead they found themselves resisting efforts to put in place a new form of oppression – segregation. In the face of these attacks, African Americans created institutions and communities to help them survive and thrive. Through their struggle,*

they challenged the nation to live up to its ideals of freedom and equality.” – **Exhibit Introduction Panel at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.** Have students reflect on the impact of segregation and how it connects to the present day. Guiding question – Has this nation lived up to its ideals of freedom and equality for all? What are some examples and non-examples of evidence?

2. Explain to students that they will be examining the life of Henrietta Lacks, an African American woman from Baltimore, and how her life and legacy have been impacted by segregation.
3. Students will complete the “first word” of the First Word, Last Word activity. (<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5069e86>)
  - a. The “first word” for this activity has been chosen, which is Henrietta.
  - b. Give each student a piece of paper. They are to write the first word vertically on the left side of the page.
  - c. Students complete an acrostic poem using the first word. Encourage them to use full sentences in their responses, rather than single words.
  - d. Collect the acrostics and save them for later.

### **Activity 1 – (30 minutes)**

1. Distribute Student Resource Sheet #1 “The Great Migration of Afro Americans.” Tell students that they will be analyzing the effect of the Great Migration on African Americans. Instruct students to annotate the article as they read, using Historian Notes. Historian Notes: As students read, they put a star by a main idea, an exclamation point by their favorite part, a question mark where they aren’t sure about something, a smiley face next to new information they learned and multiple question marks where they find something confusing that needs clarification.
2. After reading and annotating the articles, students should share their notes in small groups.
3. As a whole group, discuss the article using the Historian Notes from Powerpoint Slides #3-4.

### **Activity 2 – What was living during the era of segregation like for Henrietta Lacks?**

(60 minutes)

1. Ask students to refer back to The Great Migration article. The article mentioned segregation, but how do they think segregation impacted people like Henrietta Lacks? Tell students the goal of this activity is to try to understand what life was like for Henrietta by analyzing primary sources from the time and reading from Rebecca Skloot’s book. Project Powerpoint Slides #5-6 Henrietta’s timeline. Discuss.
2. Distribute Student Resource Sheet #3 and #4. Tell students that they will be analyzing primary sources and reading excerpts from the novel *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot as well as other secondary sources in order to write a historic journal entry from the perspective of Henrietta Lacks during the time period of 1920 – 1951. Assign each student one of the Source Packets (A- H) and distribute the corresponding Student Resource Sheets to them. While students may work in groups to analyze the primary and secondary sources, they should each create their own unique journal entry. The teacher should model expectations for the students as well as refer them to the example in Teacher Resource Sheet #2, if needed. A key describing the primary and secondary sources and highlighting pertinent quotes from *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* is available on Teacher Resource Sheet #1. Teachers may wish to use this key to modify the activity for students who are not able to read the secondary sources in their entirety.
3. After students have completed their individual journal entry, they should share with the class. Debrief by asking students to discuss their feelings about how segregation affected the life of Henrietta Lacks and other African Americans.

### Activity 3 – Does society owe Henrietta Lacks for her HeLa cells? (20 minutes)

1. Display the Spencer Crew quote found on Powerpoint Slide #7. Henrietta Lacks was a woman who was living while black in the era of segregation. As Dr. Spencer Crew remarked, “her cells are so important to society but they came from a woman that was looked down upon in this country – segregated and mistreated, which is a metaphor for the African American experience.” (Crew, 2017, June 29). Place students in pairs. Have them use the paired verbal fluency strategy for this activity. (<https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f506ee2d>) Debrief as a class.
2. Now that you know about Henrietta Lacks and her life, is she owed for her sacrifice? Discuss.





### Closing of Lesson (15 minutes)



1. Return students’ first word papers from the introductory activity. Students should not alter this first word activity. Have them review the acrostic. How does that acrostic align with their current thinking of Henrietta Lacks and her life experience?
2. Distribute a new sheet of paper. This new page will be considered their “last word.”
  - a. Have students write the first word vertically on the left side of the page and complete an acrostic poem using that word, which is still Henrietta.
  - b. For the last word, students should revise their prior statements to include more detail, complexity and appropriate terminology, correcting misunderstandings if necessary. If their ideas have not changed, they repeat what they stated before.
3. Discuss students’ Last Word. Did their beliefs change from the beginning of the lesson to the end?




**Part A:** In groups, students will analyze their assigned primary and secondary sources listed in order to respond to the supporting question listed below.

How did segregation impact accommodations for Henrietta, such as transportation, occupation, education and health?

**Teacher Resource Sheet #1** Act Like A Historian... (Key)

Source	Primary Source(s)	Secondary Source(s)
A		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> by Rebecca Skloot, Chapter 2               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- So eventually Fred [Henrietta’s cousin] took his last three dollars and twenty-five cents and bought a bus ticket north for a new life. (pg. 25)</li> <li>- Fred bought Day [Henrietta’s husband] a bus ticket to Baltimore, and three tickets north. (pg. 26)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• “On the Bus a Decade Before Rosa Parks” <a href="http://www.historynet.com/13722904.htm">http://www.historynet.com/13722904.htm</a></li> </ul>
B		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> by Rebecca Skloot, Chapter 2               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- He [Johnny, Henrietta’s father] took them all back to Clover, Virginia, where his family still farmed the tobacco fields their ancestors had worked as slaves. (pg. 18)</li> <li>- As children...they [Henrietta and Day] headed to the tobacco fields with their cousins Cliff, Fred, Sadie, Margaret, and a horde of others. They spend much of their young lives stopped in those fields, planting tobacco behind mule-drawn plows. (pg. 19)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• “Sharecropping” <a href="http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/sharecropping/">http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/sharecropping/</a></li> </ul>
C	 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> by Rebecca Skloot, Chapter 2               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Like most young Lackses, Day didn’t finish school: he stopped in the fourth grade because the family needed him to work the field. But Henrietta stayed [in school] until the sixth grade. During the school year, ...she’d walk two miles - past the white school where children threw rocks and taunted her - to the colored school, a three-room wooden farmhouse hidden under tall shade trees, with a yard out front. (pg. 20)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Beginnings of Black Education in Virginia <a href="https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/beginnings-black">https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/beginnings-black</a></li> </ul> <p>NOTE: Clover is located in Halifax County, Virginia</p>

<p><b>D</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Executive Order 8802</i></li> <li>- In early July 1941, millions of jobs were being created, primarily in urban areas, as the United States prepared for war. When large numbers of African Americans moved to cities in the north and west to work in defense industries, they were often met with violence and discrimination. In response, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and other black leaders, met with Eleanor Roosevelt and members of the President’s cabinet. Randolph presented a list of grievances regarding the civil rights of African Americans, demanding that an Executive order be issued to stop job discrimination in the defense industry.</li> </ul> <p>(“Our Documents - Executive Order 8802: Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry (1941),” n.d.)  <a href="https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&amp;doc=72">https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&amp;doc=72</a></p>
<p><b>E</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> by Rebecca Skloot, Chapter 2</li> <li>- He [Fred], like other cousins, went to work at Bethlehem Steel’s Sparrows Point steel mill and live in Turner Station, a small community of black workers on a peninsula in the Patapsco River, about twenty miles from downtown Baltimore. (pg. 25)</li> <li>- Bethlehem Steel was a gold mine in a time flush with poverty, especially for black families from the South. (pg. 25-26)</li> <li>- The work was tough, especially for black men, who got the jobs white men wouldn’t touch. Like Fred, black workers usually started in the bowels of partially built tankers in the shipyard, collecting bots, rivets, and nuts as they fell from the hands of men drilling and welding thirty and forty feet up. (pg. 26)</li> <li>- The black workers at Sparrows Point made about eighty cents an hour at most, usually less. White workers got higher wages...(pg. 26)</li> <li>• “For Black Steel Men the Living Wasn’t Easy”  <a href="http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-02-02/features/1998033014_1_steel-plant-black-jobs-henderson">http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-02-02/features/1998033014_1_steel-plant-black-jobs-henderson</a></li> </ul>

<p><b>F</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> by Rebecca Skloot, Chapter 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need quotes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Turner Station (Baltimore Heritage) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="https://explore.baltimoreheritage.org/items/show/382?tour=18&amp;index=3">https://explore.baltimoreheritage.org/items/show/382?tour=18&amp;index=3</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>G</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> by Rebecca Skloot, Chapter 8 and 21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Doctors knew best, and most patients didn't question that. Especially black patients in public wards. This was 1951 in Baltimore, segregation was law, and it was understood that black people didn't question white people's professional judgement. Many black patients were just glad to be getting treatment, since discrimination in hospitals was widespread. (pgs. 63-64)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>H</b></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks</i> by Rebecca Skloot, Chapter 3 and 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Then she [Henrietta] followed a nurse down a long hallway into the ward for colored women...(pg. 31)</li> <li>- Another [nurse] wheeled Henrietta into the small colored-only operating room, on the second floor... (pg. 32)</li> <li>- There's no way of knowing whether or how Henrietta's treatment would have differed if she'd been white. According to Howard Jones, Henrietta got the same care any white patient would have; the biopsy, the radium treatment, and radiation were all standard for the day. (pg. 64)</li> <li>- After Henrietta checked into the hospital, a nurse drew blood and labeled the vial COLORED, then stored it in case Henrietta needed transfusions later. (pg. 65)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Part B:** Using the graphic organizer from Part A, craft your response to the supporting question.

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<b>Source Assigned:</b>	<b>Supporting Question:</b> How did segregation impact accommodations for Henrietta, such as transportation, occupation, education and health?  <b>Questions to Consider:</b> Why is this source important? Compare/contrast the primary and secondary source. What inferences can you draw from this source? Draft a claim that responds to the question shown above.



## Teacher Resource Sheet #2

Historical Journal Entry for Henrietta Lacks (Key)

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### What was living during the era of segregation like for Henrietta Lacks?

Directions: Write a journal/diary entry as Henrietta Lacks. Your journal should follow this format:

- Center around the source/accomodation assigned in the Act Like a Historian activity.
  - One complete entry
    - Guiding questions to think about:
      - How would this event have affected you? Are things better or worse now that the event is in progress? How do you feel about what happened? Has your life changed? Do you fear for the future?
  - Each entry should:
    - Be a paragraph
    - Use appropriate language to show it is written in her own words
    - Include at least two factual pieces of information from Henrietta's life.
  - Include an accurate or possible date and location.
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### Example:

Primary Source: Excerpt from Rebecca Skloot's book *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

*"Fred had made it. Now he'd come back to Clover to convince Henrietta and Day that they should do the same. The morning after he came barreling into town, Fred bought Day a bus ticket to Baltimore. They agreed Henrietta would stay behind to care for the children and the tobacco until Day made enough for a house of their own in Baltimore, and three tickets north. A few months later, Fred got a draft notice shipping him overseas. Before he left, Fred gave Day all the money he'd saved, saying it was time to get Henrietta and the children to Turner Station. Soon, with a child on each side, Henrietta boarded a coal-fueled train from the small wooden depot at the end of Clover's Main Street. She left the tobacco fields of her youth and the hundred-year-old oak tree that shaded her from the sun on so many hot afternoons. At the age of twenty-one, Henrietta stared through the train window at rolling hills and wide-open bodies of water for the first time, heading towards a new life."*

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### Source(s):

#### Source Pack A

- Virginia State Law Sign
- Discussion of Segregated Buses and Supreme Court Case

### Key Event in Henrietta's Life:

A 21-year-old mother of two leaving the only home she has known (Clover, VA) to move to Baltimore, MD.

### Time and Location:

Summer of 1942, Clover, VA

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## Background Knowledge:

Henrietta and Day (David, her husband) had a hard life in VA. After marriage, they had no money to travel. As tobacco farmers, it was especially hard for them because their small farm couldn't compete with the large farms, even though war made the tobacco market prosperous. Many of their cousins, including Fred, moved to Baltimore to work at Bethlehem Steel's Sparrow Point steel mill and live in Turner Station. After the Pearl Harbor bombing, more workers were needed because the steel industry boomed, thanks to the war. Eighty cents an hour to do hard, backbreaking jobs that white workers wouldn't do was a step up from what they were used to.

Summer 1942/Clover, VA

Dear Diary,

Oh Lord! What are we getting ourselves into? Clover is all I have ever known. I sure hope Day know what he is doing...I mean we have two little children to support. The tobacco farming was not a lot but we knew what to expect. We struggled, yes we did, but we always had just enough. Moving to Baltimore – we don't have any idea. What if it doesn't work out for us like it did for Fred? What then? How can I look my little sweet babies in the eyes and know that I can't provide for them? I pray we are doing the right thing. I want my babies to grow up and be strong people in this world. I want them to live a better life than I have. I know that won't happen unless we make a change. I love Day and I trust him as head of our family. We will do this for our kids.

Henrietta

# The Great Migration of Afro-Americans, 1915–40

*Between the World Wars,  
more than 1 million black Americans  
left the South to seek opportunity  
and fuller citizenship in the North*

SPENCER R. CREW

The “Great Migration” of Afro-Americans from largely rural areas of the southern United States to northern cities during and after World War I altered the economic, social, and political fabric of American society. It made the regional problems of race and sociopolitical equality national issues and gave Afro-Americans a role in the election of northern political leaders, in contrast to the absence of a political role in the South. It helped to spawn a generation of black leaders who struggled for the full citizenship rights of Afro-Americans. Because the hundreds of thousands of people who participated in the migration tended to settle in northern urban areas, the effects of the population change were greatly magnified.

The momentousness of the migration as an event does not alter the fact that the migrants were ordinary people. Like colonial settlers or western pioneers of an earlier day, they were not looking to change the world, only their own status. A mixture of farmers, domestic servants, day laborers, and industrial workers, they came from all parts of the South, hoping for a chance to improve their own station or at least that of their children. When the outbreak of World War I drastically changed the job structure of northern urban areas, moving to these cities offered a fresh start and new opportunities for this massive wave of migrants.

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Spencer R. Crew is an historian at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, and curator of the exhibition, “Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1915–1940.”

## War trigger

Without the increase in job opportunities caused by World War I, the Great Migration might never have occurred. The fighting in Europe dramatically increased the demands on companies in the United States to produce munitions and other goods to support the war effort. At the same time, the labor pool these companies normally depended upon—immigrants and native-born Americans—was dwindling. The draft siphoned off many of these men, while the turmoil in Europe disrupted the flow of immigrants from that area. Desperately in need of additional workers, northern businesses looked southward for new sources of labor. Because Afro-Americans made up a large portion of the unskilled work force in the South and because of social conditions there, they became the targets of aggressive recruitment campaigns. Northern companies offered well-paying jobs, free transportation, and low-cost housing as inducements to Afro-Americans to move North. They also sent labor recruiters into the South who received a fee for every recruit they provided for the company they represented.

## Local prod

Socioeconomic and political conditions in the South made Afro-Americans likely candidates for migration. After the end of post-Civil War Reconstruction, the Nation’s legislators and the Supreme Court had turned their backs on black

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Americans and left determination of their citizenship rights to local jurisdictions. In the South, this abdication of authority resulted in the creation of a two-tiered system of citizenship with one set of rules for whites and a more restrictive set for Afro-Americans. In this system of “Jim Crow” laws, black Americans, under penalty of imprisonment or possibly death, were forced to use special sections when they rode on public transportation, ate in restaurants, or attended theaters. Southern statutes also excluded them from voting through such manipulations of the law as grandfather clauses, poll taxes, or literacy tests which prevented the majority of Afro-Americans from voting while allowing their white counterparts access to the ballot.

Oppressive as the political situation was, the economic situation was even more oppressive in that it locked tenant farmers (“sharecroppers”) into an ever-tightening cycle of debt. While the majority of black Americans in the South resided in rural areas, they did not own the land they worked. Most often they rented it from large landowners or worked as farm laborers. Bad crop years, boll weevil attacks, floods, or low crop prices often destroyed profit margins and left sharecroppers in debt to the landlord. In order to avoid imprisonment, they agreed to work additional years in hopes of paying off their debts. Unfortunately, profits rarely were large enough to wipe out their obligations and Afro-Americans found themselves bound to the landlord who owned their land or controlled the local store where they purchased goods on credit. Migrating offered a chance to escape the oppressiveness of the South and begin anew.

### **Problems of leave-taking**

Leaving, however, was not a simple matter for black Americans. It should be remembered that Afro-Americans had strong ties to the South and migrating meant severing lifelong friendships and strong family bonds. Migrants rarely left in large groups. Sometimes, members of families might leave together, but more often individuals left alone. They usually departed with the expectation that they would return or would send for loved ones, but migrating always involved leaving behind loved ones for an uncertain future. If aged parents or a spouse and children had to remain behind, the decision to move became even more complicated.

Migrating North also meant leaving familiar surroundings and community institutions which provided support in times of need. Church activities, social clubs, and fraternal organizations were part of a vibrant Afro-American community in the South which provided a buffer from the indignities faced in the outside community. For many Afro-Americans, this private community offered enough support to make their lives tolerable despite hardships. While hundreds of thousands of Afro-Americans chose to leave the South, many more remained behind or returned home after visiting northern cities.

Once a decision to depart was made, leaving was often a

complicated process. Southern officials tried to slow the tide of migration by arresting or detaining Afro-Americans who tried to leave. Local police regularly searched departing trains for people they thought might be heading North. To escape police scrutiny, many migrants had to steal away late at night or devise elaborate plans to get away safely. These subterfuges forced the migrants either to sell their property and belongings secretly or to take with them only what they could carry. Most migrants were working people who did not possess great wealth and leaving under these circumstances hurt them financially. Items left behind or given away brought in no money and buyers rarely gave full value for items they knew the owner had to sell. Many migrants, therefore, did not have enough money with them to tide them over for long periods of time once they reached the North. Consequently, finding a job became a high priority as soon as they arrived.

### **Northern lure**

One of the key factors influencing the individuals who did leave was the letters and visits they received from friends and relatives who had already moved North. Prior to World War I, Afro-Americans had moved North in small numbers but their economic opportunities had been severely limited. When the war changed the job markets, earlier migrants wrote letters home, urging others to come North. Also, when they traveled South to visit family on special occasions, they reinforced their letters with personal accounts of their own successes and the advantage of living outside the South. These letters and visits must have whet the appetites of Afro-American Southerners already discontent with their lot and determined to do something about it. Many oral interviews with and reminiscences of migrants include passages describing how they decided to leave after hearing about opportunities in the North from relatives or friends who had lived or worked there. Having someone to live with or a clear idea of where jobs were located undoubtedly removed some of the uncertainty of leaving.

While job opportunities were readily available in most cities, these jobs were at the lower end of the occupational ladder. Northern labor unions generally did not accept Afro-Americans as members and often threatened to strike companies where nonunion workers performed union jobs. Even when Afro-American workers acquired better paying jobs during the war, many of them had to relinquish these jobs once the war ended.

### **Types of jobs**

Afro-Americans typically wound up in dirty, backbreaking, unskilled, and low-paying occupations. These were the least desirable jobs in most industries, but the ones employers felt best suited their black workers. On average, more than eight of every ten Afro-American men worked as unskilled laborers in foundries, in the building trades, in meat-packing companies, on the railroads, or as servants, porters,



janitors, cooks, and cleaners. Only a relatively few obtained work in semiskilled or skilled occupations.

Occupational choices for black women were even more limited because few of them, in concordance with women in general, had access to industrial jobs. While some women found employment in the garment industry, packing houses, and steam laundries, the majority of Afro-American women worked as domestic servants or in service-related occupations. While none of these jobs paid high wages, they paid more than Afro-Americans could obtain for similar work in the South.

However, the cost of living in the North was higher than in the South. Funneled into certain areas in most northern cities, Afro-Americans have paid nearly twice as much as their white counterparts for equivalent housing. Higher rents made it harder for them to make housing payments and encouraged migrants to take in boarders or other family members to help meet expenses. While the extra income eased financial problems, it resulted in overcrowded living conditions, little privacy, and poor sanitation. With the additional financial burden of having to pay higher prices in neighborhood stores for food, clothing, and other necessities, settling in the North was a mixed experience for many migrants. Though they earned better wages in the North, much of the increased income was offset by higher living expenses.

### **More than economics**

Economic gain was not the sole reason migrants came North. Better educational opportunities and greater personal freedom were also motivating factors. Up to the time of the migration, Afro-American children rarely advanced past the sixth grade in the South. "Black" schools received very little money from southern legislatures, especially at the secondary level, and landlords placed pressure on parents to put their children to work rather than have them further their education. Under these circumstances, only a relatively few children were able to receive a high school or college education. In contrast, northern States allocated more money for education and had compulsory attendance requirements that forced students to stay in school longer. Moving North gave

migrants and their children access to better educational opportunities and a chance for a brighter future.

Another variable that made northern life attractive was the sense of personal freedom migrants felt after leaving the South. Northern cities were busy and impersonal; they offered greater anonymity than Afro-Americans had experienced in southern rural communities. Once they reached the North, migrants did not have to show deference to each white person they passed on the street. They could move about the city without the fear that the wrong word or tone or action might result in arrest or a more severe or even violent white response. These new social and political circumstances lifted a heavy burden from the migrants, many of whom had previously lived in a state of constant fear for their lives and those of their loved ones.

THE WORLD THEN, which migrants found in northern cities did not always correspond with their expectations. Despite the encouragements of newspapers like the *Chicago Defender*, migrants were not always welcomed by residents of the northern cities. Both black and white urban residents worried about the impact of so many new people and, on occasion, they sought to discourage migrants from coming. Although not as virulent as it was in the South, racial discrimination also existed in northern cities. And while work was available, it usually was at the bottom of the pay scale and the occupational pecking order. Housing options and higher prices presented additional adjustment problems for the migrants. As a consequence, moving North was not a panacea for the many troubles migrants faced in the South. Northern urban areas presented their own set of problems and adjustments for migrants once they reached their new destinations.

Despite these difficulties, Afro-Americans continued to migrate North and to stay. With the many adjustments migrants faced, strange environments, new neighbors, and different ways of behaving and dressing, most found northern cities more engaging than the places they left behind. Though many migrants returned South regularly and referred to it as "home," they did not remain. The South appeared to hold their hearts, but the North held their futures. □

The Great Migration of Afro-Americans, 1915-40. by Spencer R. Crew/Monthly Labor Review March 1987, bls.gov.

## Student Resource Sheet #2

Act Like A Historian... (Key)

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Part A: In groups, students will analyze their assigned primary and secondary sources listed in order to respond to the supporting question listed below.

How did segregation impact accommodations for Henrietta, such as transportation, occupation, education and health?

Source	Primary Source(s)	Secondary Source(s)
A		
B		
C		

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<b>D</b>		
<b>E</b>		

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<b>F</b>		
<b>G</b>		
<b>H</b>		

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<b>Source Assigned:</b>	<b>Supporting Question:</b> How did segregation impact accommodations for Henrietta, such as transportation, occupation, education and health?  <b>Questions to Consider:</b> Why is this source important? Compare/contrast the primary and secondary source. What inferences can you draw from this source? Draft a claim that responds to the question shown above.



## Student Resource Sheet #3

Historical Journal Entry for Henrietta Lacks (Key)

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### What was living during the era of segregation like for Henrietta Lacks?

Directions: Write a journal/diary entry as Henrietta Lacks. Your journal should follow this format:

- Center around the source/accomodation assigned in the Act Like a Historian activity.
- One complete entry
  - Guiding Questions to Think about:
    - How would this event have affected you? Are things better or worse now that the event is in progress? How do you feel about what happened? Has your life changed? Do you fear for the future?
- Each entry should:
  - Be a paragraph
  - Use appropriate language to show it is written in her own words
  - Include at least two factual pieces of information from Henrietta's life.
- Include an accurate or possible date and location.

**Source(s):**

**Key Event in Henrietta's Life:**

**Time and Location:**

**Background Knowledge:**

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Date \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Diary,

## Student Resource Sheet #4

Source Packet A

On the Bus a Decade Before Rosa Parks, By Daniel B. Moskowitz

August 2017 • American History Magazine

On June 3, 1946, the U.S. Supreme Court, for the first time in its history, ordered racial desegregation. The ruling came in a dispute that had begun nearly two years earlier, on July 16, 1944. That Tuesday, Irene Morgan, a feisty 28-year-old African-American mother of two, boarded a Greyhound bus at the Hayes Store crossroads stop in Gloucester County, in Virginia's Tidewater region. Morgan was heading home to her family in Baltimore after visiting her mother in the country. She took a seat three rows from the back of the bus beside another African-American woman who was carrying an infant. Stop by stop, seats filled. By Saluda, Virginia, 20 miles north, several passengers were standing, though the back bench seat was not full. At Saluda, two white passengers boarded. The bus driver, R.P. Kelly, asked Morgan and seatmate Estelle Fields and her baby to move to the back of the bus. Despite Morgan's urging that she keep her seat, Fields relocated with her child to the bench.

However, Kelly had picked one wrong target. Still recovering from a recent miscarriage, Irene Morgan was not in a cheery mood and in any case was not a woman to tolerate nonsense or insult. She had grown accustomed to industrial urban life with its greater racial integration and to the independence she had achieved working in a Baltimore plant turning out Martin B-26 Marauder medium bombers. Morgan forcefully refused to move.

"I wasn't going to take it," she said later. "I'd paid my money."

Virginia law forbade blacks and whites to sit next to one another on buses. Vehicles did not designate "black" or "white" seats although segregationist states historically had expected African-Americans to relegate themselves to the back of the bus. As passengers came and went, a bus driver was supposed to rearrange his customers along racially separate lines. If Kelly could not persuade Morgan to move, he himself would be guilty of a misdemeanor.

When Morgan balked, Kelly steered his Greyhound straight to the Saluda sheriff's office. A Middlesex County deputy boarded to arrest the recalcitrant traveler. Morgan wasn't having any. The sheriff "didn't even know my name," she told a Washington Post reporter, so she doubted the legitimacy of the warrant he was waving. "I just took it and tore it up and just threw it out the window." That led to a scuffle during which Morgan kicked the lawman in the groin. "I started to bite him but he looked dirty, so I couldn't bite him," she said. "I clawed him instead. I ripped his shirt." he sheriff and a deputy dragged Morgan from the bus, charging her with resisting arrest and violating Virginia law calling for racial segregation on public transportation. She spent eight hours in the county jail before her mother showed up with \$100 cash to cover her bail. At trial three months later, in October 1944, Irene Morgan admitted to resisting arrest and agreed to pay a \$100 fine.

# Morgan Vs. State of Virginia

## Case to be Supreme Court Hot Potato

By Richard Dier



At last a clear case to test the Jim-crow travel laws of Southern states which segregate interstate passengers, on interstate carriers before the U.S. Supreme Court! The case, which is the first real test to be made of a law which operates against colored passengers in a number of Southern states, involves Mrs. Irene A. Morgan of 550 W. 144th St., New York City.

She was arrested in Saluda, Va., and charged with violation of the Virginia statute requiring segregation of passengers.

The incident took place July 16, 1944, when Mrs. Morgan was a passenger on a Greyhound Bus from Gloucester County, Va., to Baltimore, Md.

**Refused to Move**

She refused to give up her seat to a white couple at a bus stop in Saluda. Arrested and forced to post \$500 bail for her release, she was convicted and fined on Oct. 18, 1944, in the Circuit Court of Middlesex County.

Her case was promptly appealed to the Supreme Court of Virginia in a writ of error.

On June 6, 1945, the Circuit Court's judgment was upheld by the Supreme Court of Virginia on the grounds that the Virginia Jim-crow statute was constitutional and applied to interstate as well as local passengers.

A motion for rehearing was filed and subsequently denied by the Supreme Court in September.

**Not on Calendar Yet**

Chief Justice Harlan F. Stone of the U.S. Supreme Court signed an order, Nov. 19, 1945, allowing her to appeal the judgment of the Supreme Court of Virginia. The U.S. Supreme Court has not placed the case on the calendar yet.

In an exclusive AFRO interview, Mrs. Morgan described the incident. She had been visiting her mother in Gloucester County, following an operation she had undergone in Baltimore.

She was returning to Baltimore for further medical treatment. She boarded a Greyhound Bus at 10 a.m. Sunday, July 16, 1944.

"The bus was quite crowded and there were a lot of people standing," Mrs. Morgan explained.

**Ordered to Move**

"A colored woman, who was seated, noticed I was tired and offered to let me sit on her lap. I accepted this offer because I was not feeling well, and sat on her lap for a few minutes in the rear of the bus.

"As the bus pulled into a stop in Saluda, a passenger vacated a seat, third from the rear, and I took it. A young colored woman with a baby in her arms sat next to me.

"It was around 11 a.m. now, suddenly, the white bus driver came over and told us we would have to give up our seats to a young white couple who just got on the bus.

"You'll have to get up and give your seats to these people," he demanded.

"I told him I wouldn't mind exchanging seats with white people told me again to get up and stand."

Returns with Policemen

Mrs. Morgan said the driver got off the bus and returned with two white police officers.

They came over to her, and the driver said colored were to be seated when all whites were seated. One officer asked, "Are you

forced me out of my seat and out of the bus.

"When I told them they were hurting my arms, one said, 'Wait till I get you to jail, I'll beat your head with a stick.'"

The names of the two men were Bristol and Segar.

"The jail was across the street from the Saluda bus station. They locked me up until 5:30 a.m. A minister, the Rev. Mr. Gale, whom I knew, got word to my mother back in Gloucester County. She rushed to the jail and posted a \$500 bond before I was released."

Her arms were torn to pieces, Mrs. Morgan said, and treatment involved considerable medical expenses.

Dr. Tinsley, president of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP, Spotswood Robinson III of Howard University and Thurgood Marshall of the NAACP took over her case.

On Oct. 18, 1944, she was convicted on two charges: she was fined \$100 for resisting an officer, and \$10 for violation of the State Jim-crow law. She paid the \$100 fine on the first charge, but appealed the second one.

**"Means a Lot"**

"This case means a lot to me," she told the AFRO, "because my family and I travel frequently to Virginia to visit my mother. My two children go there for summer vacations, and we all want to be able to travel without Jim-crow restrictions."

Mrs. Morgan, who is 28, is intelligent and pretty. She is married and lives with her husband, Sherwood, and family in a large apartment house of which he is superintendent.

They have two children, a boy of 5 and a girl of 3.

Born in Baltimore, Mrs. Morgan was educated in the public and high schools there and attended business school in New York.

She works in Manhattan, caring for an invalid. She has been living in New York since last September.

**OPEN WIDE!**

Sen. Claude Pepper's Subcommittee on Health reports on the nation's most recently discovered backlog.

It consists of 238,000,000 needed tooth extractions, 632,000,000 needed fillings, 39,500,000 crowns and bridges, 20,000,000 partial dentures, and 20,000,000 dental disease treatments.

All this was discovered, naturally enough, because people just can't seem to learn to keep their big mouths shut.—UNCLE MAT'S MONTHLY LETTER.

Courtesy of the AFRO American Newspapers Archives

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But she would not plead to the segregation violation. Convicted, she was ordered to pay a \$10 fine. She refused to pay. Civil rights lawyers working to unravel the web of law and custom that demoted African-American citizens to second-class status saw in Morgan's \$10 fine the perfect occasion for a legal challenge. A cadre of men later to be their generation's most eminent African-American jurists signed on to defend Morgan, prepping her

dispute for a journey to the U.S. Supreme Court. The lady who wouldn't move to the back of the bus was, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People secretary Walter White noted in a letter soliciting contributions to fund Morgan's litigation, one of the "obscure men and women who are the plaintiffs in cases which result in decisive gains in the practical enjoyment of our constitutional freedom by all our citizens."



Sign from segregated Nashville bus number 351/Smithsonian

Eleven years later, Rosa Parks would become a civil rights heroine by refusing to move to the back of a

bus in Montgomery, Alabama. Irene Morgan, as U.S. District Court Judge Louis H. Pollak observed later, at the very least might be termed "Rosa Parks's mother-in-law."

<http://www.historynet.com/13722904.htm>



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**VIRGINIA STATE LAW  
REQUIRES ALL  
COLORED PASSENGERS  
TO RIDE IN REAR OF BUS  
CITIZENS RAPID TRANSIT CO.**

Virginia State Law Requires All Colored Passengers to Ride in Rear of Bus/Coutresy of Library of Virginia, <http://www.lva.virginia.gov/>

## Student Resource Sheet #5

Source Packet B

Two African American men and two white men cutting tobacco in a field,  
Southside VA c. 1900 Sharecropping

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Cutting Tobacco, Southside Virginia, c. 1900/Courtesy of the Virginia Museum of History and Culture

<https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/rural-life-virginia>

After the Civil War, former slaves sought jobs, and planters sought laborers. The absence of cash or an independent credit system led to the creation of sharecropping.

Sharecropping is a system where the landlord/planter allows a tenant to use the land in exchange for a share of the crop. This encouraged tenants to work to produce the biggest harvest that they could, and ensured they would remain tied to the land and unlikely to leave for other opportunities. In the South, after the Civil War, many black families rented land from white owners and raised cash crops such as cotton, tobacco, and rice. In many cases, the landlords or nearby merchants would lease equipment to the renters, and offer seed, fertilizer, food, and other items on credit until the harvest season. At that time, the tenant and landlord or merchant would settle up, figuring out who owed whom and how much.

High interest rates, unpredictable harvests, and unscrupulous landlords and merchants often kept tenant farm families severely indebted, requiring the debt to be carried over until the next year or the next. Laws favoring landowners made it difficult or even illegal for sharecroppers to sell their crops to others besides their landlord, or prevented sharecroppers from moving if they were indebted to their landlord.

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Approximately two-thirds of all sharecroppers were white, and one third were black. Though both groups were at the bottom of the social ladder, sharecroppers began to organize for better working rights, and the integrated Southern Tenant Farmers Union began to gain power in the 1930s. The Great Depression, mechanization, and other factors lead sharecropping to fade away in the 1940s.

<http://www.pbs.org/tpt/slavery-by-another-name/themes/sharecropping/>



## Student Resource Sheet #6

Source Packet C

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African American School, Halifax County, VA/NAACP

African American School, Halifax County, VA

<https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/beginnings-black>





Elementary School for White Children, VA/NAACP

Elementary School for White Children, Halifax County, VA

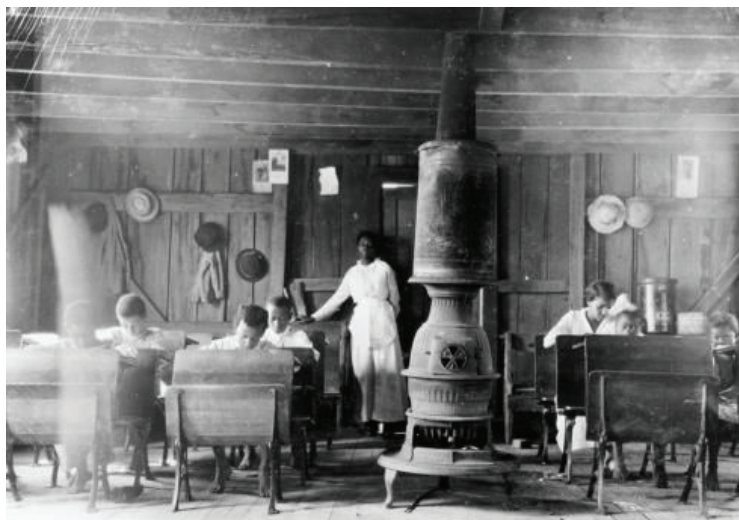
<https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/beginnings-black>

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## Beginnings of Black Education

Very few black Virginians received any education at all until public schools were established during Reconstruction. Public schools in Virginia were segregated from the outset, apparently without much thought or debate, on the widely-held assumption that such an arrangement would reduce conflict. Of course, public schools were segregated in many other states, both North and South.

When public schools were a novelty, most black Virginians were thrilled to have any free education at all. Moreover, they liked having schools of their own, not subject to white interference, in which black children would feel comfortable and not be taunted with racial epithets.



Interior, African-American Schoolhouse/Library of Congress

These schools, however, were at the mercy of the white-controlled state government for funding. Many whites did not want blacks to become educated, fearing they would challenge white supremacy and not be content with jobs working in the fields or in domestic service. Black schools therefore received far less financial support than did white schools. Black schools had fewer books, worse buildings, and less well paid teachers. Ramshackle, segregated schools marked black Virginians with a stigma of inferiority and the status of second-class citizenship that they would have to endure throughout their lives.

<https://www.virginiahistory.org/collections-and-resources/virginia-history-explorer/civil-rights-movement-virginia/beginnings-black>

EXECUTIVE ORDER

REAFFIRMING POLICY OF FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE DEFENSE PROGRAM BY ALL PERSONS, REGARDLESS OF RACE, CREED, COLOR, OR NATIONAL ORIGIN, AND DIRECTING CERTAIN ACTION IN FURTHERANCE OF SAID POLICY.

WHEREAS it is the policy of the United States to encourage full participation in the national defense program by all citizens of the United States, regardless of race, creed, color, or national origin, in the firm belief that the democratic way of life within the Nation can be defended successfully only with the help and support of all groups within its borders; and

WHEREAS there is evidence that available and needed workers have been barred from employment in industries engaged in defense production solely because of considerations of race, creed, color, or national origin, to the detriment of workers' morale and of national unity:

NOW, THEREFORE, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the statutes, and as a prerequisite to the successful conduct of our national defense production effort, I do hereby reaffirm the policy of the United States that there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries <sup>or Government</sup> because of race, creed, color, or national origin, and I do hereby declare that it is the duty of employers and of labor organizations, in furtherance of said policy and of this order, to provide for the full and equitable participation of all workers in defense industries, without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin;

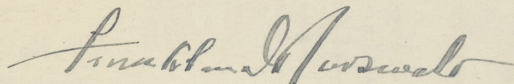
And it is hereby ordered as follows:

1. All departments and agencies of the Government of the United States concerned with vocational and training programs for defense production shall take special measures appropriate to assure that such programs are administered without discrimination because of race, creed, color, or national origin;



2. All contracting agencies of the Government of the United States shall include in all defense contracts hereafter negotiated by them a provision obligating the contractor not to discriminate against any worker because of race, creed, color, or national origin;

3. There is established in the Office of Production Management a Committee on Fair Employment Practice, which shall consist of a chairman and four other members to be appointed by the President. The chairman and members of the Committee shall serve as such without compensation but shall be entitled to actual and necessary transportation, subsistence and other expenses incidental to performance of their duties. The Committee shall receive and investigate complaints of discrimination in violation of the provisions of this order and shall take appropriate steps to redress grievances which it finds to be valid. The Committee shall also recommend to the several departments and agencies of the Government of the United States and to the President all measures which may be deemed by it necessary or proper to effectuate the provisions of this order.



THE WHITE HOUSE,  
June 25, 1941.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES  
FILED AND MADE AVAILABLE  
FOR PUBLIC INSPECTION

JUN 25 12 17 PM '41

IN THE DIVISION OF THE  
FEDERAL REGISTER

8802

Executive Order 8802 dated June 25, 1941, in which President Franklin D. Roosevelt prohibits discrimination in the defense program; 6/25/1941; Executive Orders, 1862 - 2011; General Records of the United States Government, Record Group 11/National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

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## **Executive Order 8802: Prohibition of Discrimination in the Defense Industry (1941)**

In early July 1941, millions of jobs were being created, primarily in urban areas, as the United States prepared for war. When large numbers of African Americans moved to cities in the north and west to work in defense industries, they were often met with violence and discrimination. In response, A. Philip Randolph, president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and other black leaders, met with Eleanor Roosevelt and members of the President's cabinet. Randolph presented a list of grievances regarding the civil rights of African Americans, demanding that an Executive order be issued to stop job discrimination in the defense industry. Randolph, with others, threatened that they were prepared to bring "ten, twenty, fifty thousand Negroes on the White House lawn" if their demands were not met. After consultation with his advisers, Roosevelt responded to the black leaders and issued Executive Order 8802, which declared, "There shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries and in Government, because of race, creed, color, or national origin." It was the first Presidential directive on race since Reconstruction. The order also established the Fair Employment Practices Committee to investigate incidents of discrimination.

<https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=72#>

## Student Resource Sheet #8

Source Packet E

Bethlehem workers on strike wait in the pay line at Sparrows Point,  
October 5, 1949

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Bethlehem steel mill. Sparrows Point, Maryland/ Vachon, John, 1940 September/ Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection, LC-USF34-061321-D (b&w film neg.)

<http://darkroom.baltimoresun.com/2015/01/photo-retrospective-of-bethlehem-steel-sparrows-point/#6>

For black steel men, the living wasn't easy Documentary: African-Americans working in the industry not so long ago found that discrimination was part of the job. Three who were there tell about it.

February 02, 1998 | By Carl Schoettler | Carl Schoettler, SUN STAFF

Altogether, the three African-American Steelworkers talking about the bad old days worked more than a century down at the Bethlehem Steel Sparrows Point Plant.

Worked. Labored. Through long years of disdain and discrimination and disappointment.

"See, they had two jobs down there: white jobs and black jobs," says Earl L. Fields, 73, who spent 39 years at the Point.

"All the dirty jobs," he says. "Unload cars with shovels. Plain, hard labor. The worst jobs, the dirtiest jobs, the nastiest jobs, you name it. In other words, they were black jobs."

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Earl Fields and his old friends from the Point, Francis Hayward Brown and James W. Langley, are talking about the work life they also describe in a nationally broadcast documentary, “Struggles in Steel: A Story of African-American Steelworkers,” which airs at 10 p.m. tonight on Maryland Public Television.

They’re among the 70 Steelworkers from Baltimore, Birmingham and Pittsburgh interviewed in the hourlong chronicle of working men and women who had to battle the prejudice of both management and their union. Produced by Independent Television Services, the film had its genesis in the outrage of Roy Henderson, one of the directors of the documentary.

He was shocked when a local television station report on the closing of the U.S. Steel plant in Duquesne outside Pittsburgh did not feature a single black worker.

An African-American, Henderson had worked for 18 years in the plant. He was head of the union’s grievance committee and board president of the local NAACP for 12 years. He knew African-Americans had worked in steel around Pittsburgh for 100 years.

“They don’t realize,” Henderson says in the film, “we had to fight to work hard .”

Henderson sought out Tony Buba, a white high school friend from Braddock, Pa., and an award-winning independent filmmaker who had documented Pittsburgh steel’s decline into rust. With funds from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and others, they made “Struggles in Steel.”

Ironically, among the steel mills shown being blasted into dust is the Duquesne plant where Henderson worked. Perhaps more poignantly ironic is the sad fact that the belated ascent of African-American Steelworkers to something like equality coincides with the decline of the steel industry in America.

Brown, Langley and Fields appear in the film talking with Henderson on a white marble stoop near Brown’s home on Wolfe Street in East Baltimore.

Brown, 67, worked 37 years at Sparrows Point. He’s a lean, elegant man who comes to the union hall on Dundalk Avenue wearing a kofu, a kind of fez, embroidered with a cross. James Langley, his brother, a remarkably fit 73, spent 34 years down at the Point. He’s a devout Catholic who’s on the pastoral council at St. Francis Xavier Church in East Baltimore. He served at the altar for the pope’s mass at Camden Yards.

Thick, solid and chunky, Fields looks like a guy who, if a truck hit him, it would bounce off. With a toothpick more or less permanently fixed in his mouth, he talks in a kind of sardonic rumble.

On a recent morning in the office of Burt Dixon, the president of the United Steelworkers Local 2609, the trio recall their lives of labor. An African-American, Dixon symbolizes how far blacks have come since Brown, Fields and Langley began work in a plant where even the water fountains and toilets were segregated.

All three eventually became active in the union. Fields and Langley were shop stewards. Brown was the union’s minority representative for the last 15 years he worked in the plant. ‘Pick and shovel’

Fields and Langley started at Sparrows Point soon after serving in the Army in World War II, Brown after Korean service. They all began as laborers.

“You weren’t going anywhere but laborer when I was there,” Langley says. “First job that they had for me was laborer. Everybody started as laborer. Us, anyway.

What did “laborer” mean back then?



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“Shovel!” exclaims Fields. “Pick and shovel.”

“We’re talking about people who came out of four years in the service trained to be craftsmen,” Brown says. “But when we went to Sparrows Point to get jobs, they didn’t look for anything like that, and you better not ask for anything like that.”

Fields was a combat engineer who operated cranes and bulldozers during the war.

“So when I went to the Point, it was only a matter of orientation on a piece of machinery, nothing new,” he says.

But that didn’t cut it at Sparrows Point.

“Even though you had a piece of paper that showed what you’d done in the Engineers, the people said, ‘Ah, you didn’t do this.’ “

He started working at the Point in 1947, for “a dollar and one cent an hour.” He didn’t become a crane operator until about 1965.

In a painful sequence in the PBS documentary, a Duquesne Steelworker named Henderson Thomas is moved to tears describing his two-year struggle to become a crane operator.

“By me eating, sleeping, praying, I became as good as anybody,” Thomas says in a choked voice. “I was determined and I did it.”

Training their bosses

Black job seekers routinely downgraded their skills and education levels so they would get hired, a study showed, while whites inflated theirs so they’d get better jobs.

“Most blacks,” Brown says, “understood [if] you went down to Bethlehem Steel for a job and you’re a smarty, or an educated person, they didn’t want you. They want somebody does exactly what they told you to -- and nothing else, nothing else.”

James Langley remembers African-Americans would break in a new white worker, then find out a couple of weeks later that he was their boss .

“Not only that,” he says. “You would break him in and then when there was reduction in forces, you would go and he would stay.”

“I think they went out in the woods somewhere and got those white fellows and brought them in and made them foremen,” Earl Fields says. “The employees that were there taught the foremen to be foremen! Then all of a sudden he got so he know more than you.

“Foreman one day gave me my lineup to go ahead and do a job , and he told me, ‘This is the way I want you to do it.’

“So I laughed at him.

“He said, ‘What’s funny?’

“I said, ‘Can you run this piece of equipment?’

“He said no. I said, ‘How the hell are you going to tell me how to run it if you can’t run it?’ “



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In 1974, after African-American Steelworkers filed a series of civil rights lawsuits, nine steel companies and the union brokered a consent decree that established goals and timetables for hiring and promotion of women and minorities. The decree offered \$30 million and a remedy termed “line of progression” for past discrimination.

Twenty-four years later, Francis Brown is still indignant about that solution.

“They said we’re going to give you guys \$30 million, shared among all of you, and you can take it or leave it,” he says.

Brown’s share came to about \$600. He didn’t take it.

“When I ask for my rights to a job you denied me, I want the damn job,” Brown says. “I don’t want you to put me in line for something that I get 20 years from now, or when things look better for the company, or you as a politician.”

[http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-02-02/features/1998033014\\_1\\_steel-plant-black-jobs-henderson/2](http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-02-02/features/1998033014_1_steel-plant-black-jobs-henderson/2)

## Student Resource Sheet #9

Source Packet F

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Turner Station/Baltimore Heritage

<https://explore.baltimoreheritage.org/items/show/382?tour=18&index=3#&gid=1&pid=1>

### Turner Station

By Rachel Donaldson

Tucked away in the southeastern corner of Baltimore County, and separated from the rest of Sparrow's Point by a creek, Turner Station is where many African American workers at Bethlehem Steel and nearby factories lived with their families from the 1800s up through the present.

New housing was constructed around World War I in Dundalk for white factory workers, but it excluded black workers. Partially as a result, African Americans focused on building their own community. According to local historian and cosmetologist Courtney Leigh Speed, Turner Station takes its name from Joshua Turner who first purchased the property in the 1800s:

"It started with a man named Joshua Turner who had purchased this land back in the 1800s and he had purchased it for guano, which is pigeon droppings, and this was [what] fertilized land... There was a lot of farmland near so the fertilizer was to be used for the different orchard farms. I understand there were apple farms and different vegetable farms not too far from here. So Joshua Turner, as I understand, from the records that we had read, had

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set up a station for the employees that were employed at Sparrows Point and thus this is how the name came about, Turner Station after Joshua Turner.”

While Bethlehem Steel built housing for white workers in Dundalk after WWI, they made no investments in housing for black workers in Turner Station. Instead, residents built their own homes and businesses, growing a community outside the oversight of company officials.

Beginning around 1920, development started in the neighborhoods of Steelton Park and Carnegie. Turner Station soon became one of the largest African American communities in Baltimore County. The town reached a peak around WWII when wartime workers at Bethlehem Steel moved to the area. According to local historian Louis Diggs, credit for the self-sufficient community’s development belongs largely to Mr. Anthony Thomas (1857-1931) and Dr. Joseph Thomas (1885-1963), Anthony Thomas’ son.

<https://explore.baltimoreheritage.org/items/show/382?tour=18&index=3>

## Student Resource Sheet #10

Source Packet G

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Johns Hopkins Hospital, Front view of the hospital from southwest corner at Jefferson St., 1900/ Alan Mason Chesney Medical Archives

### Johns Hopkins Hospital

Front view of the hospital from southwest corner at Jefferson St./Johns Hopkins University

<http://retrospective.jhu.edu/our-collection/johns-hopkins-hospital-postcard?backLinkHome=rue>

### The Way We Were

In the mid-20th century, segregation prevailed across America. A retired administrator recalls what those years were like at Hopkins Hospital.

*The Dome, Volume 55, Number 7, September 2004*

Those who saw the HBO film, “Something the Lord Made,” and the PBS documentary, “Partners of the Heart,” will not soon forget the racial barriers faced by Vivien Thomas when he arrived at Hopkins in 1941. The talented surgical technician was confronted with separate rest rooms and dining facilities, discriminatory personnel policies and overt prejudice. Now, a retired administrator who worked at the Hospital from 1953 until 1985 and who played an active role in integrating its patient facilities, has detailed even more precisely the extent to which racial segregation prevailed at The Johns Hopkins Hospital and School of Medicine—and how it was eliminated.

When Louise Cavagnaro joined Hopkins, Thomas was already working in the Department of Surgery research laboratory. Because hiring practices were discriminatory, most other African Americans worked in housekeeping or dietary. Some were orderlies; a few were technicians in the operating rooms. Only one was on the full-time



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faculty. None were on the house staff; none were students in the medical school; and in ways that seem inconceivable today, many facilities were separate—some for “colored,” others for “white.”

Cavagnaro began documenting the practice at JHH in 1989. Her sources were former chief residents, longtime employees, two former Hospital presidents, Russell Nelson and Robert Heyssel; the late A. M. “Mac” Harvey, a former director of the Department of Medicine; and Richard Ross, dean emeritus of the medical faculty. Following are excerpts:

Johns Hopkins, who came from a family who freed their slaves before the Civil War, said in his letter to his trustees that the Hospital “shall admit the indigent poor—without regard to sex, age, or color ...” Indeed, when the Hospital opened in 1889, the second patient admitted was African American—the first of many. At the end of the first full year of operation, 13.6 percent of patients at Hopkins were listed as “colored.” By 1900, it was 20.7 percent.

At the time, many other hospitals in Baltimore did not admit African Americans.

From the beginning, physicians at Hopkins accorded all patients, regardless of color, the same quality of care and respect. The earliest house staff manual (about 1950-51) notes the policy of addressing all adult patients as Mr., Mrs. or Miss, or by their special title, such as Dr. or Rev. A first name was to be used only when the patient indicated that was his or her preference.

Some public facilities were segregated; some were not. The entrances to the Hospital were open to all (although many blacks assumed the Broadway entrance was off-limits). The emergency room was never segregated, nor were the outpatient facilities (although some clinics had “colored” and “white” days). There were “colored” and “white” waiting rooms outside the general operating rooms on the bridge connecting the Carnegie and Halsted buildings. Public bathrooms were segregated and so were drinking fountains. One little girl, as the story goes, came back to her mother in tears after drinking from the fountain labeled “colored.” She was disappointed to discover that the water, in fact, was not colored at all.

Facilities for patients also were segregated. In March 1894, a two-story “colored ward” opened on Wolfe Street south of the pathology building near where Meyer stands today. In 1916, the hospital superintendent noted in his annual report that “provision for the reception of bodies of those who die in the hospital was deemed not satisfactory.” Two cement, refrigerated rooms were constructed in the Pathology Building—one for white patients, one for “colored.” These separate morgue facilities were retained until 1960.

Patients stayed in either private rooms, semi-private rooms, or on open wards. Some units were never segregated (e.g. the Harriet Lane Home, which opened for children in 1912); others were. The four wards in Osler, for example, were divided into two for “colored” (Osler 2 and 3) and two for white (Osler 4 and 6). Former chief residents recalled that when the units were crowded, blacks were occasionally admitted to empty beds in a white ward. Up until the late 1950s, black patients requesting private or semi-private rooms were not given reservations but placed on a “call list” and admitted to designated rooms.

In the blood bank, recalled Richard Ross, the former dean who arrived in 1947, the shelves were labeled “white blood” and “colored blood.” All the bottles were labeled “colored” or “white.” “Colored” blood was never given to white patients. But in an emergency, white blood was given to black patients.

One employee who began working at the blood bank in 1950 remembered a large blackboard, half of which was painted white and half black, on which the donors’ names were listed in the appropriate space. Black donors were drawn in a separate room from white donors. The employee recalled that blood shipped into Hopkins was not identified by race—except for blood that came from Alabama.

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The first black patient was seen in a private outpatient clinic in 1946. The patient's appointment had been made by letter; no one was aware of his race. Upon discovering the situation, internist James Bordley called Mac Harvey, new director of Medicine, for advice. Harvey told him to see the patient as he would any other.

Little by little, beginning really in the early 1950s, integration took place. Marburg was the first of the inpatient facilities. There were no general announcements or proclamations. In 1956, the admitting office was instructed by the administrator of the private services to gradually implement the change. Three years later, Alfred Blalock, chairman of Surgery and mentor to Vivien Thomas, approved the full integration of the surgical ward services. The Osler nursing units were integrated around 1960. By 1964, only one inpatient service had yet to be integrated: Psychiatry.

The Psychiatric Outpatient Clinic had always provided care to blacks. Those who required inpatient care were referred to a state hospital. The state facilities were segregated. In fact, the state had separate institutions for blacks. Hopkins' Department of Psychiatry did not accept African-American inpatients in Phipps until around 1968.

The department, however, could lay claim to having the first black physician on the full-time faculty. Earl Nash, a black research scientist in psychotherapy with a Ph.D. from New York University, was appointed to the psychiatry faculty in 1951. He served until his death in 1965.

—*Louise Cavagnaro, with Anne Bennett Swingle*



## Student Resource Sheet #11

Source Packet H



Indoor portrait of patients in a hospital ward, 1948-1970s, Rev. Anderson, Henry Clay, American, 1911 - 1998/Smithsonian

Nurses serve patient meals in segregated gynecological ward at the Johns Hopkins Hospital Woman's Clinic, 1939.

[http://web.jhu.edu/jhnmagazine/spring2010/departments/on\\_pulse.html](http://web.jhu.edu/jhnmagazine/spring2010/departments/on_pulse.html)

Excerpts from “A History of Segregation and Desegregation at the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions” by Louise Cavagnaro, 1992

Johns Hopkins, a Quaker, came from a family who freed their slaves before the Civil War and the 14th Amendment of the constitution was enacted. In his letter to his Trustees he said that the Hospital “shall admit the indigent poor—without regard to sex, age, or color...” The second patient admitted to the Hospital in 1889 was “colored” and became the first of many to be admitted to the Hospital. At the end of the first full year of operation, 13.6% of the patients were listed as “colored.” By 1900 this percentage increased to 20.7%...

All Hospital patients were to be treated with respect. The earliest House Staff manual (about 1950-51) notes the policy of the Hospital to be that adult patients would be addressed as “Mr., Mrs., or Miss, or by their special title such as Dr. or Rev...” A first name was to be used only where the patient indicated that he/she be so addressed.

Despite this policy, [a member of the medical faculty] told me of an incident that occurred in 1947 when he arrived from Harvard Medical School to be an intern on the Osler Medical Service. When he referred to one of his black female patients on Osler 3 as “Mrs. —,” he was told by his assistant resident that “I made the patient uncomfortable calling her “Mrs. —,” and that it was better to call “colored” people by their first names...”

As I joined the Hospital Administrative staff in 1953, I was an active participant in the program to eliminate “separate facilities” for “colored” and “white.” Actually the separate facilities were for Americans of African descent. Asians were never segregated...

Desegregation of inpatient facilities began in the 1950s. Marburg, which was private medicine and surgery, was the first area to be involved. There were no general announcements or proclamations... In 1959 full integration of the ward services in Surgery was approved by Dr. Alfred Blalock... The last inpatient service to be desegregated was in the Psychiatry Department... The change occurred sometime between 1968 and 1973.

[http://web.jhu.edu/jhnmagazine/spring2010/departments/on\\_pulse.html](http://web.jhu.edu/jhnmagazine/spring2010/departments/on_pulse.html)