Introduction to the Progressive Era
Segregation & Social Issues

African Americans Lose Freedoms
Southern governments enacted various measures aimed at disenfranchising, or taking away the voting rights of, African Americans & enacted Jim Crow Laws.

Jim Crow Laws – Segregation laws enacted in the South after Reconstruction. (Segregates blacks and whites in all public facilities.)

Widespread segregation became a reality. There were Jim Crow railroad cars, jury boxes and bibles, cemeteries, restaurants, parks, beaches, hospitals, etc.

Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)

- **The Facts**: In 1890, Louisiana pass a law allowing railroads to provide “separate but equal” facilities. Home Plessy, an A.A., sat in the car reserved for whites. He was arrested when he refused to move to the “colored” car.

- **The Issue**: Plessy argued that the Separate Car Act violated the 14th Amendment.

- **The Decision**: A 7 to 1 majority declared that “separate but equal” did not violate the U.S. Constitution. The Court argued that as long as states maintained “separate but equal” facilities, they did not violate the 14th Amendment. In reality, separate but equal facilities were rarely equal.

  - Example: In 1915, S.C. spent nearly $14 for every white student but less than $3 for every black student.
Booker T. Washington

Born a slave in 1856, Washington argued that African Americans should not focus their energies on seeking to overturn Jim Crow Laws.

Washington pushed African Americans to achieve economic equality with whites. He did not advocate immediate social equality because he believed that economic equality would eventually bring equal rights.

W.E.B. Du Bois

Du Bois was a Harvard-educated black historian and sociologist. Du Bois pushed for both equal economic and social rights for African Americans.

He disagreed with Booker T. Washington, that economic success was the key to equality. He also argued that Washington wrongly shifted the burden of achieving equality from the nation to the “Negro’s shoulders” alone.

Ida B. Wells

Wells owned a newspaper called Free Speech in Tennessee. She wrote numerous articles that condemned the mistreatment of blacks.

Wells spoke out against lynching. Wells was run out of town, but continued her crusade against lynching.

Women Make Gains and Suffers and Setbacks

Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton formed the National Women Suffrage Association to fight for a constitutional amendment that would grant women the right to vote.

By the time of Anthony’s death in 1906, only four western states had granted women the right to vote.

One gain that women did achieve was the number of women attending college.