CHAPTER EIGHTEEN:
THE GREAT DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL

CHAPTER SUMMARY

The Great Depression and the 1930s in America simultaneously witnessed great economic difficulties for many blacks and yet also saw increased opportunities and gains on multiple levels. Since the majority of blacks made a living from agricultural work, they were especially hard hit during the depression. Black families in both the city and country relied extensively on sharing goods and tasks to get through the crisis. Although President Herbert Hoover did little to stem the tide of economic disaster, President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s efforts proved somewhat helpful. Some of his programs, especially the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), proved discriminatory in effect, especially when left in the hands of racist whites in the South. Many of his programs, however, like the welfare programs, literally kept blacks from starving. In addition to economic help, Roosevelt appointed numerous blacks to federal government positions, increasing their visibility and influence.

Blacks also continued protesting segregation and other racial injustices. The NAACP, aided by black women as well as men, continued to challenge racism in court cases, winning a significant victory over the white primary in 1944. The established civil rights organizations encountered some competition from the Communist Party in the 1930s. The Communist Party attracted some blacks because it consistently renounced racism, worked on economic issues and pursued legal equity and social justice for blacks. The Communist Party garnered significant sympathy, although never significant membership, through its dedicated commitment to the Scottsboro Boys case. No one, however, became an advocate for more than 400 black men involved in a “study” of untreated syphilis, one of the worst examples of discrimination in American history.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Understand the general causes of, and governmental responses to, the Great Depression.

Understand the economic effects of the Great Depression on blacks in the cities and rural areas.

Understand the political realignment of blacks during the New Deal, as well as Roosevelt’s plan’s effect on them, including both positive and negative features.

Understand the varieties of protests continued by blacks during the Great Depression, including issues of economic concerns, challenging racial discrimination and organized labor protests.

Understand the role and influence of the Communist Party on blacks at this time.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

I. Introduction

II. The Cataclysm, 1929-1933
   A. General
      1. Economic Disaster
      2. Causes
B. Harder Times in Black America
   1. Problems in Agriculture
   2. Problems in urban areas
   3. Loss of menial labor
   4. Gender differences
   5. Survival Skills
C. Black Businesses in the Depression: Collapse and Survival
   1. Banking
   2. Insurance
D. The Failure of Relief
   1. Relief prior to the Great Depression
   2. Hoover’s inaction
      a. Reluctance to have federal government act
      b. Racist agenda

III. African Americans and the New Deal
   A. Roosevelt’s Election
   B. Shift in Black Voting Patterns
   C. Roosevelt and the First New Deal, 1933-1935
      1. Experimentation/Federal Relief Effort
      2. Agricultural Adjustment Act
         a. Theory
         b. Positive Impact on blacks
         c. Unfair administration in South
      3. National Industrial Recovery Act
         a. Terms
         b. Resistance/Racism
      4. Welfare Programs
         a. Positive Effect for blacks
         b. Racial differences
   D. Black Officials in the New Deal
      1. New Opportunities
      2. Role of Eleanor Roosevelt
      3. Administration’s Actions
   E. Black Social Scientists and the New Deal
      1. Uses of social science
      2. Sociology
      3. Historians
   G. African Americans and the Second New Deal
      1. New Legislation
      2. 1936 Landslide/New Coalition
      3. Black political consciousness in the North
      4. Anti-lynching legislation
      5. Reasons for black political shift
      6. Reactions of white Democrats
      7. WPA Example

IV. Black Protest During the Great Depression
   A. Inequality of New Deal as Spur to Action
   B. The NAACP and the Civil Rights Struggle
Chapter 18 | The Great Depression and the New Deal

1. Walter White
   2. Campaign against Parker Nomination

C. DuBois Ignites a Controversy
   1. Criticism of lack of economic aims
   2. Response of other black intellectuals

D. Challenging Racial Discrimination in the Courts
   1. Charles Houston
   2. Thurgood Marshall
   3. Focus on educational inequalities
   4. Fight against white primary

E. Black Women and Community Organizing
   1. Within the NAACP
      a. Daisy Adams
      b. Juanita Mitchell
      c. Ella Baker
   2. Outside the NAACP

V. Organized Labor and Black America
   A. CIO
      1. Formation
      2. Organization
   B. BSCP
   C. Black Women and Union Involvement

VI. The Communist Party and African Americans
   A. Views of Racism
   B. The International Labor Defense and the Scottsboro “Boys”
      1. Background of case
      2. Important Legal Precedents
      3. Final outcome
   C. Debating Communist Leadership
      1. NAACP/CP differences
      2. Black Public Opinion of Communist Party
         a. Praise
         b. Contempt
   D. The National Negro Congress
      1. Origins
      2. Failure

VII. The Tuskegee Experiment
   A. Origins
   B. Effects
   C. Outcome

VIII. Conclusion