Selected Events of Structural Oppression and Resistance in American History

1501  The Spanish Crown permitted export of kidnapped persons termed “salves” to America.

1509  The first *repartimiento* in Puerto Rico was established; this system consisted of distributing among officials and colonists fixed numbers of Indians for wage-free and forced labor.

1524  First kidnapping in America – Florentine explorers kidnapped an Indian child to bring to France.

1546  “New Laws” barring Indian enslavement were repealed at the insistence of New World Colonists.

1561  First kidnapped Africans brought to America as slaves.

1619  Slaves had become essential to the economy of Virginia - The system of American slavery developed and became codified beginning in the mid-seventeenth century; by about 1680, it was fully established. Under this system, a slave was chattel--an article of property that could be bought, punished, sold, loaned, used as collateral, or willed to another at an owner's whim. Slaves were not recognized as persons in the eyes of the law; thus they had no legal rights.

1680’s Abolitionist Movement begun by Mennonites and Quakers.

1705  Slavery codes defined as slaves all those servants brought into the colony who were not Christian in their original countries, as well as those Indians sold to colonists by other Indians. These codes were later adopted by other slave states.

1750  Slaves make up 20% of colonial population, 40% of Virginia.

1758  The Philadelphia yearly meeting said that slavery was inconsistent with Christianity, and in 1775 Quakers played a dominant role in the formation of the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, the first antislavery society in America.

1776  Declaration of Independence: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.

1787  The Constitutional Convention adopts a "three-fifths rule" as a compromise to settle differences between Northern and Southern states over the counting of slaves for purposes of representation and taxation. Slaves are to be counted as three-fifths of a free man for both purposes. Constitution is approved, extending slavery for 20 years.

1793  The Fugitive Slave Act of 1793 passed. Although slaves' legal status as property disqualified them from claiming constitutional rights, the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 denied these rights to freed slaves as well. Escaped slaves were not allowed jury trials, and it was not uncommon for runaways to be refused permission to present proof of their freedom in court. It made it a federal crime to assist an escaping slave, and established the legal mechanism by which escaped slaves could be seized (even in "free" states), brought before a magistrate, and returned to their masters.
1808 Slave importation abolished by act of Congress – continued illegally until 1860.
1817 Indian Country Crimes Act – provided federal jurisdiction over crimes between non-Indians and Indians.
1820 Missouri Compromise - prohibited slavery in the former Louisiana Territory north of Parallel 36°30' north except within boundaries of proposed state of Missouri.
1829 Publication of David Walker’s Appeal; $10,000 bounty placed on his head dead or alive and anyone caught with a copy.
1830 Indian Removal Act – forced relocation of thousands of Native Americans More than 2 million slaves in US; abolitionist movement expands.
1831 Nat Turner leads the most successful slave rebellion in U.S. history. The rebellion is suppressed, but only after many deaths.
1831 Alexis de Tocqueville, author of "Democracy in America," was seated next to former President John Quincy Adams and asked the old man: "Do you look on slavery as a great plague for the United States?" "Yes, certainly," Adams answered. "That is the root of almost all the troubles of the present and the fears for the future."
1838 Trail of Tears – 16,000 Cherokee people forcibly removed by federal troops
1846 U.S. - Mexican war begins.
1848 Mexican War ends (Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo; extends slavery into Texas.
1850 Compromise of 1850 strengthens fugitive slave laws.
1857 The Dred Scott Decision – denies citizenship to African Americans.
1859 Last slave ship / John Brown’s revolt at Harpers Ferry.
1861 Civil War begins.
1862 Homestead Act – made Indian Nations’ land available to settlers.
1863 The Emancipation Proclamation goes into effect freeing slaves in the “rebellious” states only (did not free slaves in DE, MD, KY, and MO).
1864 Civil War ends.
1865 Amendment 13 – Abolished and prohibited slavery and secured a minimal degree of citizenship to former slaves.
1866 Civil Rights Act conferring citizenship upon black Americans and guaranteeing equal rights with whites.
1868 Amendment 14 – granted citizenship to all people “born or naturalized in the United States,” and included the due process and equal protection clauses. This amendment failed to explicitly prohibit vote discrimination on racial grounds.
1870 Amendment 15 – prohibition of voting rights discrimination on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude; Census began counting blacks by name.
1800s The Black Codes were laws passed on the state and local level mainly in the rural Southern states in the United States to limit the civil rights and civil liberties of African Americans after the Civil War.
1871 Indian Appropriation Act – made tribal members wards of the state rather than members of sovereign nations.

1877 *Tilden-Hays Compromise of 1877* gives presidency to Rutherford B. Hays; formally ends Reconstruction and opens the way for violence against newly freed slaves in the South.

1881 Segregation of public transportation.

1882 Chinese Exclusion Act—Suspended Chinese immigration for 10 years.

1887 Dawes Severalty Act – reduced landholdings of the Indian nations and opened up surplus to settlement.

1892-1900 Ida B. Wells-Barnett publishes companion pieces to *The Red Record* (a history of lynching in the United States).

1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* – establishes doctrine of “separate but equal”.

1898 Spain renounced all claim to Cuba, ceded Guam and Puerto Rico and its dependent islets to United States, and transferred sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States for $20,000,000.


1905 Marriages between “Mongolians” and white prohibited by California Civil Code.

1906 San Francisco Board of Education excludes Asian children from public school.

1908 “Gentleman’s Agreement” between Japan and the U.S. severely limits Japanese immigration to the U.S.

1910 Angel Island Detention Center opens in San Francisco for Asian immigrants to the U.S.

1910 Mexican Revolution begins; thousands of Mexicans flee across the border for safety.

1916 Puerto Rico becomes a territory; U.S. nationalizes all Puerto Rican as citizens and allows Puerto Ricans to elect their legislature.


1924 Indian Citizenship Act – extended citizenship and voting rights to all American Indians; National Origins Act prohibits immigration of all Asian laborers.

1940 U.S. Congress grants citizenship to Puerto Ricans.

1942 Executive Order 9066 – directed U.S. military to round up all people of Japanese ancestry on the Pacific Coast and “relocate” them to prison camps.

1942 The bracero program begins, allowing Mexican nationals to temporarily work in the United States – primarily in the agricultural industry.

1944 *Korematsu vs. U.S.*—exclusion of Japanese from Pacific Coast justified because of “military necessity”.

1948 The Puerto Rican legislature approved the infamous Law 53, known as "La Ley de la Mordaza" (Gag Law), which made it illegal to display a Puerto Rican flag, to sing a patriotic tune, to talk of independence, and to fight for the liberation of the island.

1953 Operation Wetback: The U.S. Immigration Service deports more than 3.8 million people of Mexican heritage.
1954 *Brown vs. Board of Education* – “separate is inherently unequal”.

1955 The kidnapping and murder of 14-year old Emmett Till in Money, MS. The murder of Emmett Till was noted as one of the leading events that motivated the nascent American Civil Rights Movement.

1956 Immigration Act permits residents of Asian Pacific Triangle to enter U.S. as “quota” immigrants.

1962 César Chávez organizes the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA) in Delano, California.

1964 Civil rights Act - outlawed racial segregation in schools, public places, and employment. Conceived to help African Americans, the bill was amended prior to passage to protect women, and explicitly included white people for the first time. It also created the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

1965 Voting Rights Act – outlawed discriminatory voting practices that had been responsible for the widespread disenfranchisement of African Americans in the United States ensured voting registration; Immigration and Nationality Act abolishes “quota” system, giving Asian immigrants equal standing as other immigrants.

1966 The 936 section of the United States Internal Revenue Tax Code is implemented. This new code allowed American companies to make profit in Puerto Rico without paying any taxes.


1979 Klan in Greensboro, NC.

1982 Vincent Chin killed by autoworkers in Detroit who, mistakenly thinking that he is Japanese, blame him for being laid off.


1992 Rodney King beating by police officers in Los Angeles caught on video and sparks countrywide protests against racial profiling.

1994 Book – *The Bell Curve*.

1994 The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) comes into affect, stimulating trade between the United States and Mexico. Massive increases in border populations occur due the treaty.

1995 The first Million Man March held in Washington, D.C.

1998 James Byrd lynched in Jasper, TX.

2007 Everyday Democracy (formerly the Study Circles Resource Center) announces *Creating Communities of Racial Equity*, a project funded by the W.K. Kellogg and C.S Mott Foundations.

2008 *We Shall Remain* – documentary of Native American history.

2009 Barack Hussein Obama, first person of color elected the 44th President of the United States of America.