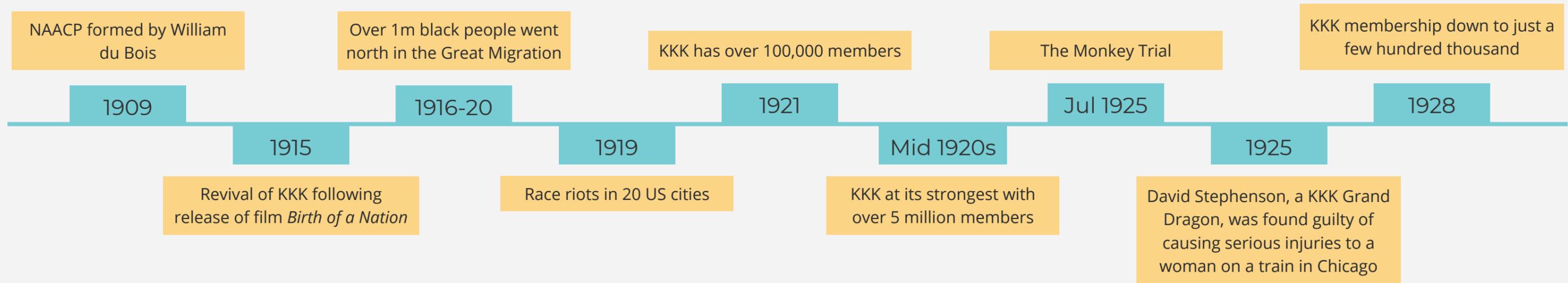


Key Question 2 : Was America a country of religious and racial intolerance?

Timeline of events



Key words

Bible Belt	a religious area in the southern states of the USA
Evolution	scientific theory of how humans evolved
Rope Law	members of the Ku Klux Klan killed black people by hanging them without trial (lynching) and often took the law into their own hands
Jim Crow Laws	the names of the laws that introduced segregation in the south (the laws which kept black and white people apart)
Segregation	laws separating black and white people in public places in society
WASP	refers to the group known as: White Anglo Saxon Protestants

Important concept

The 'nation of contrasts' is clear within the issues of religion and race. On the one hand, fundamentalism and racism point that America was a nation of intolerance at this time. But organisations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and National Association for the Advancement of Colored People show that determination for a more progressive society was strong. Perhaps geography, age and class are where the contrast were.

The Monkey Trial

- Bible Belt Christian fundamentalists organised a campaign against the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution in American schools.
- The campaign was a success as in 1925, a new law was passed in six states, including Tennessee, prohibiting the teaching of Charles Darwin's **evolution**.
- The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) were outraged by the ban. One Biology teacher - Johnny Scopes, from Dayton Tennessee - ignored the new law and taught his pupils Darwin's ideas, he was taken to court.
- The court case received a great deal of publicity in the media. Clarence Darrow was Scopes' lawyer, while the lawyer for the Fundamentalists was William Jennings Bryan. The case was known informally as the Monkey Trial.
- Scopes was found guilty of teaching the theory of evolution to his pupils and was fined \$100 (approximately \$1,400 in today's money).
- By 1929, six states in the Bible Belt, in the most southern parts of the country, had passed laws against teaching the theory of evolution. It was now possible that some children in America would grow up not knowing anything about this theory.
- More importantly the case showed a different side to America from the one portrayed in the so called **Jazz Age**.

Key Question 2 : Was America a country of religious and racial intolerance?

Who were the KKK?

- The Ku Klux Klan were an American White supremacist hate group in the southern states in 1865 at the end of the American Civil War. The group believed that white people were better and wanted to see black people remain as slaves.
- The movement was revived in 1915 by William J Simmons following the release of the film *Birth of a Nation*. It grew quickly and by 1921 it had over 100,000 members. By the mid 1920s the movement was at its strongest with 5 million members.
- Only **WASPs** could join the Klan. The KKK discriminated against black people, Roman Catholics, Jews and Mexicans.
- Members of the Klan often killed black people by **hanging without trial** (lynching) – **Rope Law**. Sometimes the local police could not protect the victims and even took part in the killings.
- Those responsible were not brought to justice very often, and Klan members knew that their friends in the courts would not find them guilty.
- It was difficult for the government to change the attitudes of white people in the south and politicians were scared of losing votes.
- In 1925, David Stephenson, the Klan Indiana Grand Dragon, was found guilty of causing serious injuries to a woman on a train in Chicago.
- The membership of the Klan fell to a few hundred thousand by 1928.

Black Communities and other racial minorities

- As a result perhaps of high levels of immigration, at the beginning of the 20th century, there was more racial prejudice towards those who were not considered 'real' Americans.
- In 1900, there were 12 million black people living in the USA and 75 per cent of them lived in the south.
- Although slavery had been abolished in the 1860s, white people controlled southern states using **Jim Crow laws** to **segregate** the black population and discriminate against them. These laws prevented them from voting, gaining a good education and decent jobs.
- The majority of black Americans were not able to profit from the flourishing economy of the 1920s and early 1930s. This was especially true in the southern states where the economy was based on agriculture and crop prices fell throughout the 1920s and early 1930s.
- Industrial development had created a demand for manufactured goods and jobs were created in the industrial cities of the north.
- Between 1916-1920 almost 1 million black people went north in the Great Migration to cities like Chicago, New York and Detroit in search of work. Although there were no Jim Crow laws, black Americans were still treated as second class citizens in the northern cities. Due to low wages they lived in poor neighbourhoods, like Harlem in New York, called **ghettos**.
- In 1919, there were riots in 20 US cities as racial tension between black and white people increased. This was one of the factors that sparked the increase in the membership of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK).

The response of the black people

- Various groups fought for the cause of black people during this period. By 1900, a former slave, **Booker T Washington** opened the **Tuskegee Institute** in Alabama to provide education and training for black people, believing that they had to make economic progress before making political progress.
- The **Harlem Renaissance** in New York developed talented black Americans such as singers, musicians, artists and authors.
- **The National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP)**, established in 1909 by **William du Bois**. The NAACP focussed on opposing racism and segregation through legal methods and holding non-violent activities, such as marches and protests.
- **The Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA)**, established in 1914 by **Marcus Garvey**. UNIA members were more militant. Garvey encouraged black people to establish their own businesses and to employ black people only. He also encouraged them to return to their homeland, Africa. *Black is beautiful* was his most famous slogan.
- William du Bois and Marcus Garvey both tried to improve conditions for black people, but their methods were so different that they became sworn enemies.