Timeline

1619. A ship carrying more than 20 enslaved Africans arrived in the English colony of Virginia. By 1690, every colony had enslaved Africans.

1640. John Punch is thought to have become the first person whose enslavement was officially recognized. The Virginia Governor's Council sentenced Punch, who was African, to enslavement for the remainder of his life after he attempted escaping indentured servitude. Two European men in indentured servitude who attempted to escape with him received only lesser extensions of their terms of servitude.

1654. Jewish refugees from Brazil immigrate to New Amsterdam (now New York). The following year Dutch West India Company allowed Jewish settlers to reside permanently in New Amsterdam.

1662. The Virginia House of Burgesses passed a colonial law to clarify the status of children of women of African descent requiring the children born in the colony to take the status of the mother, whether bond or free.

1676. In response to Bacon's rebellion, in which White and Black farmers rose in armed revolt of Colonial Governor William Berkeley, colonial governments responded by hardening the racial caste of slavery in an attempt to divide the two races from subsequent united uprisings. Tragically, the farmers' uprising included the slaughter of Native Americans to seize their land, against the orders of Governor Berkeley.

1740. The Naturalization Act of 1740 granting any Protestant residing in any of the American Colonies for seven years, without absence from that colony for more than two months, to have full rights of British subjects.

1788. A majority of states adopt the United States Constitution. Under federal law, but not state laws, Jews are given full rights.

1790. The Naturalization Act of 1790 enacted by the United States Congress that set the first uniform rules for the granting of United States citizenship by naturalization. The law limited naturalization to "free white person[s] ... of good character".

1790. In his letter to the Hebrew Congregation in Newport, Rhode Island, George Washington recognizes Jews' inherent natural rights, assures that the United States will protect these rights and will give "to bigotry no sanction, to persecution no assistance."

1793. Congress passes the Fugitive Slave Act, making it a federal crime to assist an enslaved person trying to escape.

1796. Dr. Levi Myers of Georgetown, South Carolina, becomes the first Jew to serve in a state legislature.

1814: Andrew Jackson leads U.S. forces and Native American allies against Creek Indians, who opposed American expansion and encroachment of their territory. In defeat, the Creek lost over 20 million acres of land.

1830: President Andrew Jackson signs the Indian Removal Act, which gives plots of land west of the Mississippi River to Native American tribes in exchange for land that is taken from them. The act has been referred to as an act of systematic genocide for the resulting deaths.

1830. In Charleston, South Carolina, the percentage of Jews with enslaved people of African descent (83%) was equivalent to that of the percentage of Charleston Whites in general (87%).

1838**:** With only 2,000 Cherokees having left their land, President Martin Van Buren enlists 7,000 troops to speed up the process by forcibly marching them 1,200 miles. The more than 5,000 Cherokee deaths and the hardships resulting from this action led this to be known as the Trail of Tears.

1850. Congress passes another Fugitive Slave Act, which mandates government participation in the capture of escaped slaves.

1851: Congress passes the Indian Appropriations Act, creating the Indian reservation system. Native Americans aren't allowed to leave their reservations without permission.

1857. The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in the Dred Scot v. Sanford case determines that Congress does not have the right to ban slavery in the states. Chief Justice Roger Taney states in the majority opinion that Black people have "no rights which the White man is bound to respect."

1860. 80% of the United States' Gross National Product was tied to slavery.

1862. The Homestead Act gave poor citizens, which largely excluded free African-Americans, 160 acres of Western land to settle.

1862. Judah P. Benjamin, a Jewish former United States senator from Louisiana, is appointed Secretary of State of the Confederacy.

1862. President Lincoln, upon hearing from American Jewry, revokes General Ulysses S. Grant's ordered expulsion of Jews as an entire class of people from his war zone. Grant issued the order following the alleged profiteering of several Jews. Four Jews served as brevet brigadier generals in the Union Army.

1863. Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

1865. The 13th Amendment officially abolished slavery, except when convicted of a crime. Southern states immediately enacted a series of laws known as the Black Codes and widespread intimidation, designed to restrict freed Black peoples' activity by making and enforcing laws that increased Black people's incarceration and therefore allowing their forced labor.

1865. Every state with the exception of Massachusetts still barred Black people from serving on juries. Many states prohibited Black people from testifying in court against White people.

1865. As head of the Freedmen's Bureau, General Oliver O. Howard authorizes the lease of 40 acre plots of abandoned plantation land to newly freed African-Americans. However, President Johnson rescinds this order the same year and returns the land to plantation owners.

1867. Reconstruction begins, basically placing the South under martial law, and grants and protects the rights of Black Americans, after thousands of those freed from enslavement are brutally attacked and murdered by angry Whites. Reconstruction grants and protects the rights of Black Americans. The following year, the 14th Amendment broadened the definition of citizenship, granting "equal protection" of the Constitution to people who had been enslaved.

1870. Congress adopts the 15th Amendment, which nominally guaranteed that a citizen's right to vote would not be denied "on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude." During Reconstruction, Black Americans won election to southern state governments and to the U.S. Congress. In reaction, White protective societies arose during this period, the largest of which was the Ku Klux Klan, committed to disenfranchising Black voters through voter suppression and intimidation as well as more extreme violence.

1870 – 1924.   2.5 million Jews immigrated to the United States. By 1930, over 4 million Jews lived in the United States.

1877. The era of Reconstruction ends. A deal is made with southern democratic leaders which makes Rutherford B. Hayes President in exchange for the withdrawal of federal troops from the South, and puts an end to efforts to protect the civil rights of African Americans.

1820 – 1879. The Jewish population of the United States soars from 3, 000 to over 200, 000, due to the booming commercial economy and religious freedom.

1881. Tennessee passes the first of the "Jim Crow" segregation laws, segregating state railroads. Southern states pass similar laws over the next 15 years.

1881. Over two million Eastern European Jews immigrate to the U.S. following pogroms after the assassination of Czar Alexander II.

1887 The Dawes Act allowed the U.S. government to take 86 million acres of land, or 62 percent of the total pre-1887 National American land holdings, and to redistribute the land to White Americans.

1896. The US Supreme Court rules in the case of Plessy v. Ferguson case, racial segregation and "Jim Crow" laws to be constitutional.

1911. American Jewry successfully lobbies Congress to exit a 1832 treaty with Russia after the country refused to honor an American passport of an American Jew.

1915. Leo Frank, a Jewish former factory superintendent, is lynched by an anti-Semitic mob in Marietta, Georgia, after the governor commuted his death sentence to life in prison.   Many believe that he was wrongly convicted of the murder of 13-year-old employee Mary Phagan, and point to evidence that primary witness in his trial, James Conley, a Black employee at the factory, may have been the actual murderer.

1915. Moses Alexander, a Jewish immigrant, is elected Governor of Idaho.

1916. Louis Brandeis is appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

1916 - 1940. The First Great Migration sees multitudes of Black American flee the South for the North, in search of better economic situations and to escape the violence of White mobs. This enrages both White Southerners, who are losing workers upon whom their businesses depend, and White Northerners, who fear that the arrival of Black Americans will drive down wages. From 1917 - 1920, particularly during the Red Summer of 1919, White Northerners routinely terrorize and murder their recently arrived Black neighbors.

1920. Henry Ford begins publishing anti-Semitic propaganda, including the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

1921. In the Tulsa race massacre, White mobs attacked the thriving Black community of Greenwood (dubbed "Black Wall Street") murdering up to 300 people, leaving 10,000 homeless, and destroying 1,400 businesses.

1921. The Immigrant Acts of 1921 and 1924 bars immigration of Eastern European Jews and others. The legislation was motivated in part by pseudo-scientific racial concepts.

1924: U.S. Congress passes the Indian Citizenship Act, granting citizenship to all Native Americans born in the territorial limits of the country.

1925. Detroit prosecutor, Robert Toms, who later serves as a judge for the Nuremberg Trials, pursued charges against Dr. Ossian Sweet and his family after they kill in self-defense two of the hundreds of White neighbors who rained down bricks, rocks, and bullets upon them as they attempt to move into their new home. The Sweets are found not guilty by an all-White jury, but die soon after from tuberculosis and suicide.

1934. The Federal Housing Administration (FHA) refuses to insure mortgages in and near African-American neighborhoods, a policy known as "redlining", while also subsidizing mass-production of entire subdivisions for Whites with the requirement that none of the homes be sold to African-Americans. In 1935, the FHA Underwriting Manual discouraged banks from issuing loans in urban areas.

1939. The MS St. Louis, a German ocean liner carrying more than 900 Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany, sought safe harbor in the U.S., Canada, and Cuba. Denied, the ship returned to Europe, where many of those Jews abroad were later rounded up and murdered.

1944. After WWII, the G.I. Bill provided returning veterans benefits including lost-cost mortgages, low-interest loans and financial support. However, Native American, Black, Latino, and Asian servicemen were largely locked out from receiving benefits. The G.I. Bill, along with FHA loans, help to dramatically grow the White middle class and allow White people unprecedented opportunities for equity appreciation. By 1948, most housing under construction had government financing.

1950s - 1960s.   The Interstate highway system is plotted along a route that destroys Black neighborhoods in order to avoid disrupting White communities, and is also planned in a way to help physically separate Black neighborhoods from White neighborhoods.

1954. In Brown v. Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court strikes down segregation as unconstitutional.

1964 The Civil Rights Act is signed, prohibiting discrimination of all kinds. 1965 The Voting Rights Act is passed, outlawing the practices used in the South to disenfranchise African American voters.

1968: The Indian Civil Rights Act is signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson, granting Native American tribes many of the benefits included in the Bill of Rights.

1968. The Fair Housing Act allowed African-Americans to purchase homes in the suburbs that had been subsidized for White people for decades. However, by that time, the value of these homes had soared, and after being shut out from opportunities to gain equity appreciation, these homes were now affordable for few African-Americans.