



THE ROLE OF BLACKS
AT THE TRANS-MISS

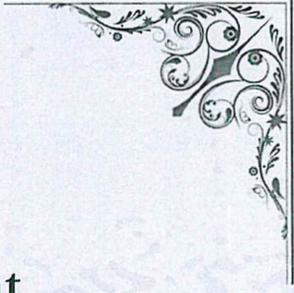
A decorative scroll with a white background and a black outline, featuring ornate flourishes at the top and bottom. The text is centered on the scroll in a black, serif font. The scroll is set against a light blue background with a subtle floral pattern. Four decorative corner flourishes are positioned at the corners of the page, each featuring a black outline and intricate scrollwork.



BLACK INVOLVEMENT

So Much More than The Old Plantation



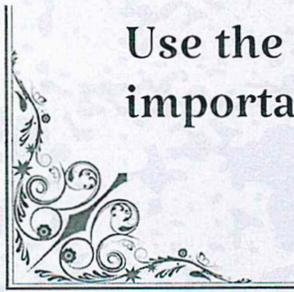


GATHERING CONTEXT

CONTEXT helps us understand the background information for an event.

- For example, if there is a fight in the cafeteria, the context might be the relationship between the kids involved, any words exchanged or actions between them, etc.

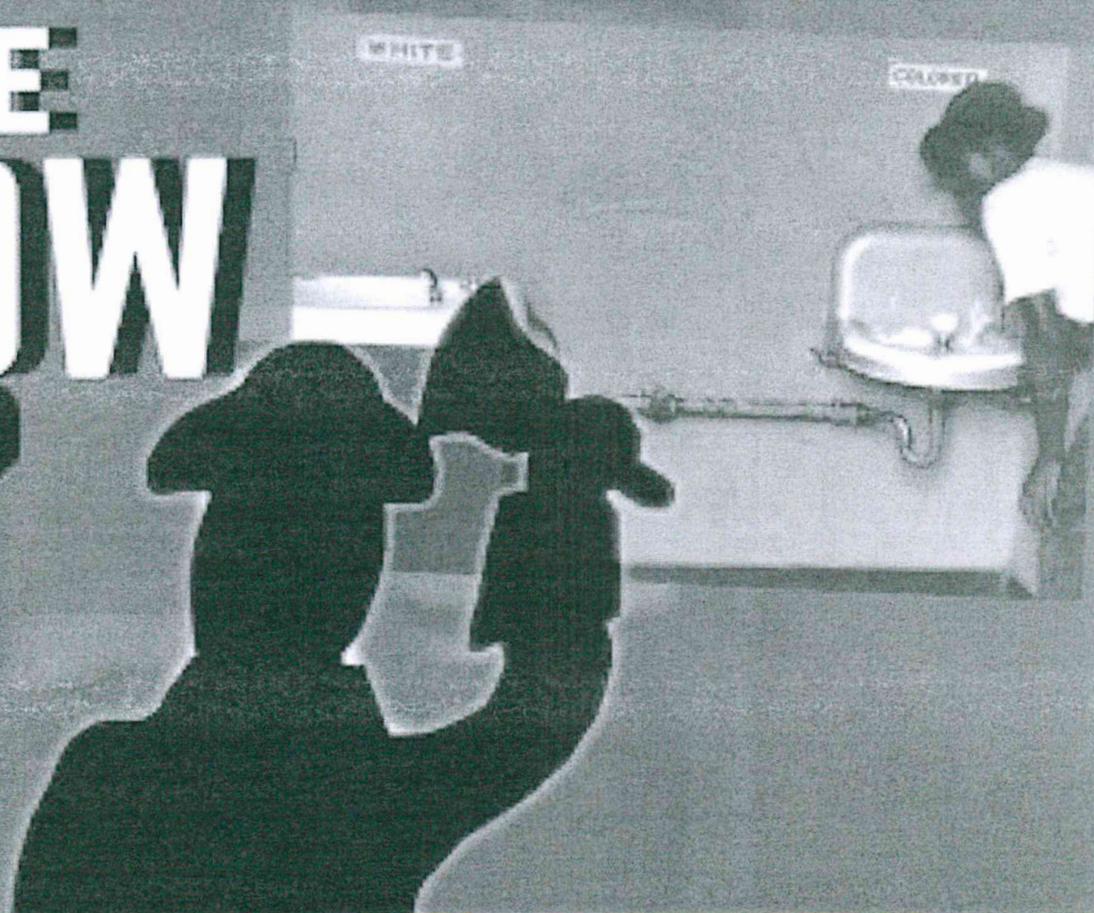
Together, we will watch a video to understand the **context** of the formation of a new group at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition. This group was called the Representative White & Colored American Association of the United States.



Use the video to answer the questions about Jim Crow laws and other important **context** for this group.

DAILY BELLRINGER

WHAT WERE JIM CROW LAWS?



[https://youtu.be/gGHf3gTaJyg?
si=tKtOucph66YsKxSw](https://youtu.be/gGHf3gTaJyg?si=tKtOucph66YsKxSw)

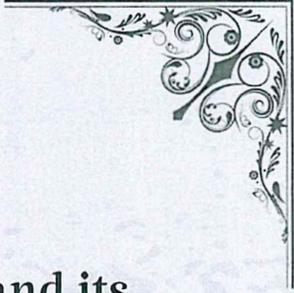
BLACK INVOLVEMENT

Under the leadership of Omahans Edwin Overall and Cyrus Bell, the Trans-Mississippi Exposition held two meetings on August 17-19, 1898, bringing together Black and White People from across the United States.

- The Congress of White & *Colored Americans
- The *Colored National Personal Liberty League

Note: Colored was the predominant and preferred term for African Americans in the mid- to late 19th century in part because it was accepted by both White and Black Americans as more inclusive, covering those of mixed-race ancestry.

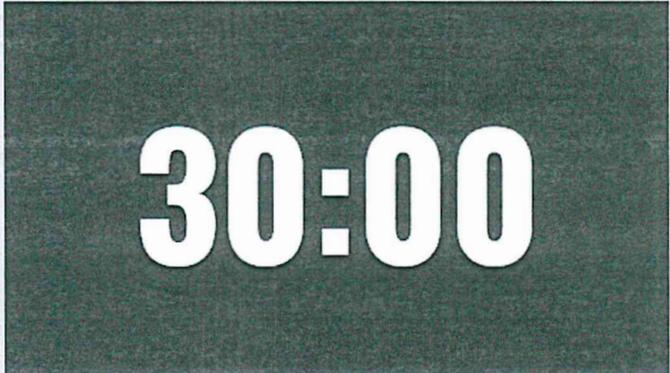




WHAT WAS THE ASSOCIATION?

GOAL: Understand the goals and ideas behind the integrated congress and its leaders. Compare and contrast the congress with other representations of Black folks at the Trans-Mississippi Exposition.

1. Preview the questions and prompts on your notes. Notice what information you will need to pay special attention to as you read.
2. Read the article. Pause when you find information to help you answer the questions on your notes.



30:00

EXIT TICKET

Answer the question below. We will share our answers in five minutes.

Based on what you read today, how did the Trans-Miss show BOTH racial progress AND racist ideas that still existed in the 1890s?

Example answer: The Trans-Miss showed racial progress because...However, the Trans-Miss also showed racist ideas because...

05:00

Name:

BLACK INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI EXPOSITION

PART ONE: GATHERING CONTEXT

DIRECTIONS: Use the information from the video to help you answer the questions below.

1. What was the purpose of Jim Crow laws?
2. Where does the name "Jim Crow" come from?
3. In the case *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the Supreme Court decided that segregation was legal as long as facilities were " _____ but _____." What two words fit in the blanks?

PART TWO: COMPARING BLACK INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRANS-MISSISSIPPI EXPOSITION

DIRECTIONS: Preview the questions and prompts below. Then, read the article. Use the article to answer the questions and prompts below and to the right.

DIRECTIONS

In each box, draw a symbol or image that represents the **six goals** of the Representative White & Colored American Association.

GOAL #1

GOAL #2

GOAL #3

GOAL #4

GOAL #5

GOAL #6

DIRECTIONS

Choose to focus on either Edwin Overall or Cyrus Bell. Answer the questions about them in the box below.

1. What do we know about this person's life **before** they moved to Omaha?
2. What did this person do for work when they lived in Omaha?
3. What is special or noteworthy about this person's story?

Black Involvement in the Trans-Mississippi Exposition

At the Trans-Mississippi Exposition in Omaha, a new group called the **Representative White and Colored American Association of the United States** was formed. Two leaders from Omaha's Black community, Edwin R. Overall and Cyrus D. Bell, organized the meeting that started the group. Between 150 and 200 people came to the first meeting, which lasted three days: August 17, 18, and 19, 1898.

At the opening meeting, Edwin Overall gave a speech about the group's goals. He said the Exposition was a great place for people from all over the country to come together and talk about important issues. He wanted people to work together to create respect and understanding between White and Black Americans. Overall believed that ignorance was the reason people didn't understand each other. He hoped the group could help people learn more and get along better.

Overall also said that Black Americans admired the ideas of the U.S. government and were willing to defend the country. He felt it was his job to help make the country live up to its promise of being the "land of the free," where Black Americans could have the same chances as White Americans in jobs, education, and housing.

A newspaper article from the Omaha World-Herald on August 18, 1898, listed the group's ten goals. Here are six of them in simpler words:

1. The group wanted both races to work together to improve jobs, education, and how people treated each other.
2. The group would welcome everyone and not support just one political party.
3. They wanted people to talk openly about problems between Black and White Americans.
4. They supported the U.S. Constitution, which promises life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for everyone, no matter their race or past.
5. The group would meet once a year at a time and place they chose.
6. Anyone from any state or territory in the U.S. could join.

The group's activities included speeches, debates, and discussions about racial pride, equality for Black Americans, and creating a more respectful society.

On Friday, August 18, African Americans had their own day at the Exposition called "Colored American Day," and more than 14,000 people attended.

The **National Colored Personal Liberty League** also met at the Exposition (August 17–19). The organization emerged in the late 1860s to 1920s, primarily at the state and local levels. Their main focus in the beginning was resisting the Fugitive Slave Act and helping runaway slaves escape and post Civil War era worked toward equality.

These activities were very different from another part of the Exposition called the “Old Plantation.” That was a show where Black performers lived in pretend slave cabins and acted out what slavery looked like in the South. White audiences watched them sing and dance to “slave songs.” Newspapers used racial slurs to talk about the performers, and the show used hurtful stereotypes to get people to come. Even though the show was popular, it was very disrespectful.

Edwin R. Overall was the first president of the new group. He had been enslaved in Missouri but escaped and joined the Underground Railroad in Chicago. During the Civil War, he helped recruit Black soldiers for the Union Army. After the war, he moved to Omaha and became the city’s first Black mailman, a very respected job. He was also one of the richest men in Omaha and even ran for political office.

Cyrus D. Bell also helped organize the group. He had been enslaved on a cotton plantation in Mississippi. Bell moved to Omaha and started a local newspaper in the early 1880s called the Afro-American Sentinel. He worked hard to show the good things about democracy. He also helped in President Grover Cleveland’s campaign in 1884. Because of his work, Bell was given a job in the Internal Revenue Department, which collects taxes. This was the first time a Black person in Nebraska worked for the federal government. It was a big deal because at that time, many Democrats had supported slavery and laws that hurt Black people.

The creation of the Representative White and Colored American Association and the meeting of the Personal Liberty League were important steps forward. They showed that people in Omaha were working toward equality and respect for everyone.