

COLLECTIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

Excerpt from *Hurts White Folks Most*, Richmond Planet, July 5, 1902

HURTS WHITE FOLKS MOST.

THE unconstitutional "Constitutional" Convention after doing all the damage it could to the Negro has decided to adjourn. That it was a failure goes without saying. There is scarcely a sensible man in the state who doesn't wish that it had been drowned before it was born. It came to this city for the avowed purpose of injuring the Negro, curtailing his rights and abridging his privileges.

When its labors were completed, the howls were mostly from the white men, with a limited number of protests from the Negroes. The latter had been least injured.

The Democratic white men in convention assembled at Norfolk, Va., agreed to the calling of a Constitutional Convention with the understanding and promise: 1st, that no white men would be disfranchised. As a matter of fact, white men have been disfranchised. 2nd, that the revised Constitution should be submitted to the people for ratification. It was not submitted to the people for ratification, not even to the white people.

All colored men had been put out of office and all white men put into office.

The unconstitutional "Constitutional" Convention proceeded to put white men out of office by abolishing certain offices. The colored men were not injured, because they held no office.

The unconstitutional Constitutional Convention reduced the tax rate from 46cts to 30cts per hundred dollars.

This benefited the white man because he owned property and it benefited the colored man because he owned property too. The unconstitutional "Constitutional" Convention dealt a blow at trusts by establishing a corporation commission. As only white men owned the railroads, this affected the white men and did not interfere with the colored.

The unconstitutional "Constitutional" Convention decided that no officer of the state should enjoy the luxury of a free railroad pass. As the colored folks held no office and did not have any railroad passes, this was a blow at the white brother and he is crying yet, reminding one of a colicky baby yelling for its mother's milk.

ERA

Early 20th Century, Jim Crow

THEMES

Government, Disenfranchisement

CITATION

Excerpt from *Hurts White Folks Most*, John Mitchell, Jr.,
Richmond Planet, July 5, 1902

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- What phrase does this newspaper article from 1902 repeat? Why?
- What message is this article trying to communicate about the "unconstitutional 'Constitutional' Convention" in 1902?
- Who produced this article? Who is the audience for this article?
- Why is representation important in government?

CONTEXT

As editor of Richmond's Black newspaper, *The Richmond Planet*, John Mitchell, Jr., often highlighted the triumphs and injustices experienced by the Black community in Virginia. In this piece, Mitchell reports on the Virginia State "unconstitutional 'Constitutional' Convention" that took place in 1901-1902 to rewrite the state constitution and enacted policies that disenfranchised large numbers of both Black and poor white voters. The only Virginia Constitution not ratified by the voters, the 1902 constitution concentrated power in the hands of a select group of wealthy white men. It would not be until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that many of the discriminatory policies in this state constitution would be overturned, and not until 1971 when the Virginia State Constitution would be rewritten to reverse that discrimination.

"Discrimination! Why that is exactly what we propose. To remove every Negro voter who can be gotten rid of, legally, without materially impairing the numerical strength of the white electorate."

Lynchburg Representative Carter Glass, April 4, 1902

"1906 Report of the Proceedings and Debates of the Constitutional Convention, State of Virginia," pages 6 and 7.

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All colored men had been put out of office and all white men put into office.

The unconstitutional "Constitutional" Convention proceeded to put white men out of office by abolishing certain offices. The colored men were not injured, because they held no office.

The unconstitutional Constitutional Convention reduced the tax rate from 40cts to 30cts per hundred dollars.

This benefited the white man because he owned property and it benefited the colored man because he owned property too. The unconstitutional "Constitutional" Convention dealt a blow at trusts by establishing a corporation commission. As only white men owned the railroads, this affected the white men and did not interfere with the colored.

The unconstitutional "Constitutional" Convention decided that no officer of the state should enjoy the luxury of a free railroad pass. As the colored folks held no office and did not have any railroad passes, this was a blow at the white brother and he is crying yet, reminding one of a colicky baby yelling for its mother's milk.

Richmond Planet, July 5, 1902

Transcript

Richmond Planet, July 5, 1902

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