

The Unveiling **Our Little known History**



What Kind Of Deal Is This? **As people moved forward after the Depression, others were left behind.**

Most progressives (including ourselves) have a special place in their hearts for the FDR administration and its visionary 1935 New Deal which provided unprecedented protections for our most vulnerable citizens: the old, the poor, the sick, the disabled. New Deal programs such as Social Security lifted many Americans out of abject poverty and still today, offer a safety net and dignity against some of the hardships of life.

What is not well-known is how the New Deal explicitly *left out* many of our most vulnerable: much of the Black

population, which at the time was predominantly southern, rural, and impoverished. The 1935 Social Security Act denied old-age pensions for farm and domestic workers, automatically excluding a substantial number of senior African Americans. In the South, that number was nearly 40%. And so Black workers, who were already at a grave disadvantage, working very low paying jobs, were further deprived.

How does this happen!? In an administration acknowledging its power and responsibility for the well-being of its citizens? Well...if you have a sneaking suspicion white southerners were involved, you're right. Determined to maintain that cheap, dependent agricultural workforce, they balked at protections. In that age of Jim Crow, white Southern politicians held powerful committee seats in Congress, effectively acting as gatekeepers to new legislation. In order to pass desperately needed relief, Roosevelt courted their support and bowed to their demands. Thus, again, through policy, powerful white Southerners maintained their chokehold on Black citizens long after slavery ended.

As many white families managed to find a foothold after the Great Depression, huge numbers of Blacks were left to fend for themselves. While the act was not written explicitly forbidding rights to Blacks as so many Jim Crow laws were, it often had the same effect.