**TEDDY ROOSEVELT & BOOKER T WASHINGTON AND RACISM 1901**

*“When I asked Booker T. Washington to dinner I did not devote very much thought to the matter….I did not think of its bearing one way or the other, either my future or anything else”*

Teddy Roosevelt, November 8, 1901

**GUESS WHO’S COMING TO DINNER**

* Booker T. Washington (1856? -1915) was a famous black educator, author and orator who led the Tuskegee Institute, Tuskegee AL for over 30 years.
* Booker was born into slavery to Jane, an enslaved [African-American](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American) woman on the plantation of James Burroughs in southwest Virginia, near [Hale's Ford](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hale%27s_Ford,_Virginia) in [Franklin County](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franklin_County,_Virginia).
* He never knew the day, month, and year of his birth(although evidence emerged after his death that he could have been born on April 5, 1856). Nor did he ever know his father, said to be a [white](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Americans) man who resided on a neighboring plantation.
* From his earliest years, Washington was known simply as "Booker", with no middle or surname, in the practice of the time. At school, Booker was asked for a surname for registration. He chose his stepfather’s first name, Washington. Still later he learned from his mother that she had originally given him the name "Booker [Taliaferro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Taliaferro)" at the time of his birth, Washington immediately readopted it as his own, and became known as Booker Taliaferro Washington for the rest of his life.
* When he was nine, Booker and his family in Virginia gained freedom under the [Emancipation Proclamation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emancipation_Proclamation) as U.S. troops occupied their region.
* After emancipation Jane took her family to West Virginia to join her husband, Washington Ferguson, who had escaped from slavery during the war and settled there. The illiterate boy Booker began painstakingly to teach himself to read and attended school for the first time. He loved learning and reading books.
* He made his way east to [Hampton Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hampton_Institute), a school established in Virginia to educate [freedmen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedmen) and their descendants, where he also worked to pay for his studies. He later attended [Wayland Seminary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wayland_Seminary) in Washington, D.C. in 1878.
* In 1881, the Hampton Institute president [Samuel C Armstrong](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_C._Armstrong) recommended Washington, then age 25, to become the first leader of [Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuskegee_University). Under his direction, his students literally built their own school: making bricks, constructing classrooms, barns and outbuildings; and growing their own crops and raising livestock; both for learning and to provide for most of the basic necessities. Both men and women had to learn trades as well as academics. The Tuskegee faculty used all the activities to teach the students basic skills to take back to their mostly rural black communities throughout the South.

**THE NEW PRESIDENT SEPTEMBER 14, 1901**

* Teddy Roosevelt (1858-1919) has just become President culminating a wild three-year rise.
* Urged by Senator [Henry Cabot Lodge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Cabot_Lodge), President McKinley appointed Roosevelt as the [Assistant Secretary of the Navy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assistant_Secretary_of_the_Navy) in 1897. Without approval from Secretary Long or McKinley, Roosevelt sent out orders to several naval vessels, directing them to prepare for war. [George Dewey](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Dewey), who had received an appointment to lead the [Asiatic Squadron](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asiatic_Squadron) with the backing of Roosevelt, later credited his victory at the [Battle of Manila Bay](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Manila_Bay) to Roosevelt's orders.
* With the beginning of the Spanish American War in late April 1898, Roosevelt resigned from his post as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Along with Army Colonel [Leonard Wood](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonard_Wood), he formed the [First U.S. Volunteer Cavalry Regiment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rough_Riders), referred to by the press as the "Rough Riders". Only the officers had horses in Cuba, so it became an infantry unit.
* Under Roosevelt's leadership, the Rough Riders became famous for the charge up [Kettle Hill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kettle_Hill) during the Battle of San Juan Hill on July 1, 1898, while supporting the regulars. The victories came at a cost of 200 killed and 1,000 wounded.
* Shortly after Roosevelt's return to the United States, Republican Congressman [Lemuel E Quigg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lemuel_E._Quigg), a lieutenant of party boss Tom Platt, asked Roosevelt to run in [1898 for the New York gubernatorial election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1898_New_York_state_election). He won and became governor.
* Roosevelt attended the [1900 Republican National Convention](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1900_Republican_National_Convention) and was nominated as McKinley’s VP. The voters gave McKinley an even larger victory than that which he had achieved in 1896.
* On September 6, 1901, President McKinley was attending the [Pan American Exposition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan-American_Exposition) in [Buffalo, New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo,_New_York), when he [was shot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Assassination_of_William_McKinley) by anarchist [Leon Czolgosz](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_Czolgosz) – TR became President September 14,1901.

**THE WHITE HOUSE DINNER OCTOBER 16, 1901**

* On October 16, 1901, shortly after moving into the [White House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_House), President TR invited his Southern Strategy adviser BTW to dine with him and his family. Roosevelt, while [Governor of New York](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Governor_of_New_York), frequently had black guests to dinner and sometimes invited them to sleep over.
* This instance was not the first time African Americans were invited to dinner at the White House. In 1798 [John Adams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Adams) had dined in the [President's House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/President%27s_House_(Philadelphia)) in Philadelphia with [Joseph Bunel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Bunel) (a mulatto representative of the Government of Haiti) and his black wife. Black people, including leaders such as [Frederick Douglass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_Douglass) and [Sojourner Truth](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sojourner_Truth), had been received at the White House by Presidents [Lincoln](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln), [Grant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulysses_S._Grant), [Hayes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rutherford_B._Hayes) and [Cleveland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grover_Cleveland). At the invitation of First Lady [Lucy Hayes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucy_Hayes), [Marie Selika Williams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Selika_Williams) became the first black professional musician to appear at the White House.

**THE SOUTHERN REACTION – A SHOCK TO TEDDY**

* The response from the southern press and politicians was immediate, sustained, and vicious. [James K Vardaman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_K._Vardaman), a Democrat from Mississippi, complained that the White House was now, "so saturated with the odor of n\*$$@& that the rats had taken refuge in the stable;" the [*Memphis Scimita*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Memphis_Scimitar)*r* declared it "the most damnable outrage which has ever been perpetrated by any citizen of the United States”, and on 25 October the Missouri [*Sedalia Sentinel*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sedalia_Sentinel) published on its front page a poem entitled "N\*$$@&s in the White House” which ended suggesting that either the president's daughter should marry Washington or his son one of Washington's relatives. Senator [Benjamin Tillman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benjamin_Tillman) stated, "Now that Roosevelt has eaten with that n\*$$@& Washington, we shall have to kill a thousand n\*$$@&s to get them back at their places."
* Governor of Georgia Candler commented, "No self-respecting man can ally himself with the President, after what has occurred." He added that "No Southerner can respect any white man who would eat with a negro." Governor of South Carolina [Miles McSweeney](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Miles_McSweeney) stated, "No white man who has eaten with a negro can be respected; it is simply a question of whether those who are invited to dine are fit to marry the sisters and daughters of their hosts.
* The Northern presses were more generous, acknowledging Washington's accomplishments and suggesting that the dinner was an attempt by Roosevelt to emphasize he was everybody's president.

**WHY SO VIOLENT A REACTION FROM THE SOUTH?**

* The **Jim Crow laws** were [state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._state) and local laws introduced in the [Southern United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_United_States) in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that enforced [racial segregation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racial_segregation_in_the_United_States) and oppression, "[Jim Crow](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_(character))" being a pejorative term for an black person – enforced by violence: lynching & neighborhood massacres, done by the Ku Klux Klan and other hate groups.
* It should be noted that Jim Crow laws were abolished by 1965 Civil Rights bills passed by LBJ.

“*The idiot or vicious Bourbon element of the South is crazy because I have had Booker T. Washington to dine. I shall have him to dine as often as I please.”* Theodore Roosevelt – As if to prove it, TR visited Tuskegee institute in October 1905 to honor BTW.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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