



1919

African American Education

African American children who resided in the Metro Detroit area attended Wingert Elementary School. In the next three years they would come to represent a third of the school's population. This demonstrated the amount of growth Detroit's African American community experienced within that past decade. People were moving not just to find work, but also to start a new life, bringing children and starting families in Detroit.

African Americans often received a mediocre education at best. Jim Crow laws in the south kept education separate and very unequal, and education in the north was not much better. Schools like Wingert Elementary educated an overwhelming amount of the black population in Detroit.



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¹ African American school children posed with their teacher
Library of Congress, Miscellaneous Items in high Demand [LC-USZ62-26381]

² Wingert Elementary
Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

³ School Children
Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

⁴ School Production
From the Collections of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

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Credits:

Jackson, Cynthia L. *African American Education: A Reference Handbook*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2001. Print.

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Keywords/Topics:

Education

Questions:

1. Why did blacks receive a better education in the north than in the south?
2. Name an educator in Detroit that helped opened schools for blacks.
3. Why was the education system for African Americans mediocre?

Links to Internet Websites:

<http://www.oah.org/pubs/magazine/deseg/sitkoff.html>

<http://www.aera.net>

<http://www2.lib.virginia.edu/small/collections/jdavis/>

<http://www.vahistorical.org/civilrights/education.htm>

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African American educators, like Fannie Richards, were opening schools for black children all over the country to provide them with a quality education. In the image shown above black students pose with their teacher outside of their school.

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Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Wingert Elementary in Detroit, Michigan was one of the few African American schools in the area. Many children of autoworkers attended this school, because of its proximity to African American neighborhoods.

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Courtesy of the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

The adolescents pictured here are students of Lincoln School. Schooling was a somewhat formal occasion in those days and male students usually wore a suit and tie, while female students wore dresses. Notice the disproportionate amount of male and female students. Almost 20 years into the 20th century, it was still not uncommon for young girls to regularly not attend school.

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From the Collections of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History

This group of students dressed in costumes, including Native American and sailor attire, are posed in front of their school building. Although, the specific event is unclear, from the number of students involved, this image shows the importance of education, not only in regards to literacy, but also within community activities.