

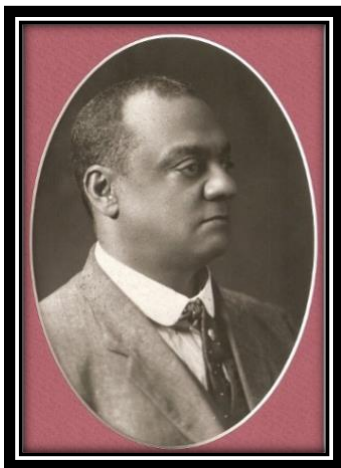
PROFILE OF RESISTANCE

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON HART

lawyer

“Hart did not, like Rosa Parks, become a household word.”

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Background Information

Born: October 30, 1857; Died: January 6, 1934

Hart was born in Eufaula, Alabama. He attended the American Missionary Association School from 1867 to 1874. In 1874, white supremacists used violence to attempt to overthrow the Reconstruction government, but Hart campaigned in favor of Reconstruction. He faced threats and had to relocate to Washington, D.C. for safety. In 1876, he enrolled in the college preparatory program at Howard University. In 1885, he graduated from Howard University with his bachelor's degree. He then went on to study law at Howard University School of Law.

Beginning in 1895, he was able to practice law before the United States Supreme Court.

Hart's Resistance

In 1904, the Maryland Legislature passed a Jim Crow law that mandated steamship lines and railroads to maintain separate but equal facilities. Black ticket holders on the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad Trains heading south were forced to move to the colored compartment after the train crossed the Mason-Dixon line.

Hart refused to give up his seat and move to the back of the train, and he was arrested for doing so. He spent time in the Elkton jail and was charged with violating the Jim Crow law.¹ Hart filed an appeal with the Circuit Court due to the unconstitutional nature of the law and the fact that it was in conflict with the Interstate Commerce Law. When the *State v. Hart* case reached the Court of Appeals, the judges sustained the Jim Crow law but held that it cannot apply to interstate passengers, and Hart won the case.

Achievements

Hart's resistance to Jim Crow accommodations left an impression on the actions of activists in the generations since his brave legal fight. Activists such as Irene Morgan, Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin and countless others would wage a similar fight during the 20th century to further desegregate traveling accommodations. Hart was the first Black lawyer appointed as special U.S. District Attorney in the District of Columbia.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Henry_Harrison_Hart

Essential Questions

1. Why was *State v. Hart* a groundbreaking case?
 - a. How can the legal system be used to tear down white supremacy in some cases, but uphold white supremacy in others?

2. Hart was a well-educated, prominent citizen in Washington, D.C. and was recognized in other areas of the country as well. Although he was privileged in some ways, he still faced discrimination on the basis of race throughout his lifetime.
 - a. How can wealth in Black communities protect its people?

3. ***“Hart did not, like Rosa Parks, become a household word.”***
 - a. Who should decide which political acts become more well-known than others?
 - b. Who are leaders today who are less well known than other activists?
 - a. What can be done to prevent this?