

★ ★ Progressive Era ★ ★

Reform Movements



At the turn of the twentieth century, progressives boldly fought for social, political, and economic reforms. Here are ten leading reform movements.



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Civil Rights

W.E.B. Du Bois published "The Souls of Black Folk" in 1903, calling for a more proactive approach to civil rights.

The NAACP was founded in 1909 by a group of black and white activists.
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Conservation

Millions of acres of land and mineral sites were set aside as national property during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency for conservation and reclamation.

The National Park Service was founded by the Organic Act of 1916.
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Government Reform

Wisconsin governor Robert La Follette implemented the "Wisconsin Idea," reforming taxes, elections, railroad rates, and more, to allow voters more direct control over government.
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Health and Medicine

The 1906 publication of Upton Sinclair's "The Jungle" led to national food and drug regulations.

Educator Abraham Flexner's 1910 study of American medical colleges led to the reform of medical education.
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Labor Reform

Theodore Roosevelt became the first president to support workers by intervening in the coal strike of 1902 on behalf of miners.

Reformers also advocated for legislation regulating child labor and workplace safety.
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Radical Trade Unionism

The International Workers of the World was founded in 1905.

The IWW was open to any wage earner regardless of occupation, race, creed, or sex.
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Socialism

The American Socialist Party was founded in 1901.

Socialist candidate Eugene Debs won 800,000 votes in the 1912 presidential election.
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Temperance

Temperance groups blamed violence, poverty, and other social problems on alcohol.

The Eighteenth Amendment was ratified in 1919, prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or transportation of alcohol.
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Trust Busting

Theodore Roosevelt used the 1890 Sherman Anti-Trust Act to "bust" up powerful monopolies and corporate trusts like the Northern Securities railroad trust and the Standard Oil trust.
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Women's Rights

Margaret Sanger opened the United States' first birth control clinic in Brooklyn in 1916.

Suffragists rallied in every state for women's suffrage until the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

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