

Teacher Guide

Primary Source Set: Jim Crow in America



[Me and Jim](#) c1895

<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b11186>

"...I have traveled in this free country for twenty hours without anything to eat; not because I had no money to pay for it, but because I was colored. Other passengers of a lighter hue had breakfast, dinner and supper. In traveling we are thrown in "jim crow" cars, denied the privilege of buying a berth in the sleeping coach. This monster caste stands at the doors of the theatres and skating rinks, locks the doors of the pews in our fashionable churches, closes the mouths of some of the ministers in their pulpits which prevents the man of color from breaking the bread of life to his fellowmen."

Pamphlet Excerpt from "[The Black Laws](#)" by [Bishop B. W. Arnett](#).

In 1865, the U.S. Civil War ended after four devastating years. Although the war had begun as a struggle to reunite a nation in which slavery would still exist, it ended as a war to free people from slavery. Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 symbolically established a national intent to eradicate slavery in the United States. In January of 1865, the 13th amendment to the Constitution officially abolished slavery in this country, while the 14th amendment, passed in 1866, set forth three principles:

- All persons born or naturalized in the U.S. were citizens for the nation and no state could make or enforce any law that would abridge their rights of citizenship.
- No state could deny any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.
- No state could deny any person equal protection of the laws.

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However, Congress was unsuccessful in its attempt to build a new political order based on equality. In less than a decade, African Americans were effectively disfranchised and racial segregation was imposed on nearly every aspect of their lives. Tired of struggling with the problems of reconstruction, the North accepted this new order in the South.

It wasn't until the 1960s, almost 100 years after passage of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, that issues of equality for all again gained a national focus.

What happened?

Black Codes

No sooner had the Civil War ended than most Southern states adopted what came to be known as Black Codes or Black Laws. These codes were aimed at limiting the economic and physical freedom of former slaves. While early attempts to confer inferior status to Southern blacks were blocked by legislation and prevented by federal troops, it eventually proved impossible to protect the civil rights of African Americans. The violence and terrorism that swept over the South in the 1860s and 1870s convinced African Americans that though the law of the land gave them equality, the reality of white supremacy denied them their rights.

With the Compromise of 1877, political power was returned to Southern whites in nearly every state of the former Confederacy. The federal government abandoned attempts to enforce the 14th and 15th amendments in the South. By 1890, when Mississippi added a disfranchisement provision to its state constitution, the legalization of Jim Crow had begun.

Jim Crow

Thomas "Daddy" Rice, a white minstrel show performer of the 19th century, was famous for blackening his face with makeup and dancing a crazy jig while singing the song "*Jump Jim Crow*." Twenty years later, in the 1850s, the Jim Crow character had become a standard figure in U.S. minstrel shows. Jim Crow was one of many terms and iconic images that inferred black inferiority in the popular culture of the time. By the end of the century, instances of racial discrimination toward blacks were often referred to as *Jim Crow* practices.

In the period from 1890 to 1910, aided by crucial Supreme Court decisions, Southern states began to systematically create laws that ensured a subordinate social position for African Americans. Blacks and whites were separated in all public places, and black men were prevented from exercising their right to vote. The signs we associate today with Jim Crow – "Whites Only," "Colored" – appeared at water fountains and rest rooms, as well as at the entrances and exits to public buildings. Jim Crow remained the law of the South for decades.

An End to Jim Crow

In the 50 years following the end of Reconstruction, African Americans moved away from the South in large numbers. As blacks overcame the difficulties presented by urban life in the North, and as they became increasingly recognized in politics, sports and the arts, a social revolution began. A new generation of activists demanded that the U.S. government provide all its citizens with the rights and protections guaranteed by the Constitution. The Civil Rights movement of the mid-20th century instigated a new quest for equal rights for all Americans. The death throes of Jim Crow were violent and ugly, but finally, in the 1960s and '70s, die it did.

Suggestions for Teachers

Teachers may use these Library of Congress primary source documents to support teaching about Jim Crow in the U.S. This primary source set documents evidence from popular culture, as well as the causes and effects of these laws. This set includes images, song sheets, articles, legal documents, political cartoons and sound files.

The content of some of these documents could be considered offensive by today's standards. This primary source set provides an opportunity to help students understand that different times shape different cultural values and mores.

Additional Online Resources

General Library of Congress Links

[Discovery Label for Kids: What does Jim Crow mean?](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/kidslabel-6.html>

[Today in History - Plessy v. Ferguson](#)

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/may18.html>

[America's Library – Plessy v. Ferguson](#)

http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/jb/progress/plessy_1

[America's Library – Thurgood Marshall](#)

<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/all/marshallthrgd>

[America's Library – Martin Luther King](#)

<http://www.americaslibrary.gov/cgi-bin/page.cgi/aa/all/king>

[Timeline of African American History](#)

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aap/timeline.html>

[African-American Experience in Ohio](#)

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/ndlpedu/collections/aaohio/thinking.html>

[Voices of Civil Rights](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/civilrights/>

[African-American Mosaic](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/african/intro.html>

[African American Odyssey – The Civil Rights Era](#)

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/aaohhtml/aopart9.html>

["With and Even Hand": Brown v. Board at Fifty](#)

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/brown/>

[From Slavery to Civil Rights](#)

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/civilrights/nonflash.html>

[Photographs of Signs Enforcing Racial Discrimination](#)

http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/085_disc.html

[African American Photos for the Paris Exposition of 1900](#)

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pp/anedubhtml/anedubabt.html>

[Drinking fountain on the county courthouse lawn, Halifax, North Carolina \(1938 photograph\)](#)

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?pp/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(cph+3c00414\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?pp/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(cph+3c00414)))

http://memory.loc.gov/learn/community/cc_civilrights_kit.php

Library of Congress

[Photographs of Signs Enforcing Racial Discrimination](#)

http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/list/085_disc.html

[The souls of black folk : essays and sketches / by W.E. Burghardt Du Bois. \(1903\)](#)

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/uncall:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(BDP-1646\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/uncall:@field(DOCID+@lit(BDP-1646)))

[Souls of Black Folk](#)

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaeo:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(o3254\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaeo:@field(DOCID+@lit(o3254)))

[When Will He Admit This?](#)

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaeo:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(o3643\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaeo:@field(DOCID+@lit(o3643)))

Lesson Plans

[From Jim Crow to Linda Brown](#)

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/97/crow/crowhome.html>

[Two Unreconciled Strivings](#)

<http://memory.loc.gov/learn/lessons/98/two/index.html>

Links Outside the Library of Congress

[The History of Jim Crow](#)

<http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/home.htm>

[The Rise and Fall of Jim Crow](#)

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/jimcrow/>

[Remembering Jim Crow](#)

<http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/remembering/>

[Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia](#)

<http://www.ferris.edu/news/jimcrow/>

[Jim Crow Laws](#)

http://www.nps.gov/malu/documents/jim_crow_laws.htm

[Creating Jim Crow](#)

<http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~dalong/soc134/creatingjimcrow.pdf>

Citations: Jim Crow in America

Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations (Chicago Manual of Style) is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students.



Reed, Jim P. "Jim Crow Jubilee." Sheet music. c1847. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a37712>



Jim Crow. Image. n.d. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a16219>

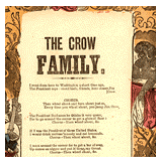
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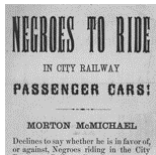
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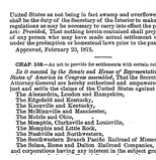
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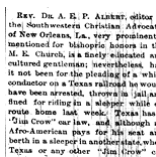
De Marsan, H. "The Crow Family." Song sheet. New York, H. De Marsan, n.d. From the Library of Congress, *America Singing: Nineteenth-Century Song Sheets*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/amss:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(as200590\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/amss:@field(DOCID+@lit(as200590)))



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United States Congress. "An Act to Protect All Citizens in their Civil and Legal Rights." *Statutes at Large*. 43rd Congress, 2nd Session, Volume 18, Part 3. 1 March 1875. From Library of Congress, *A Century of Lawmaking for a New Nation: U.S. Congressional Documents and Debates, 1774-1875*. <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=022/llsl022.db&recNum=364>



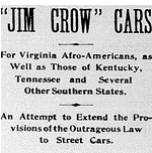
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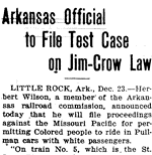
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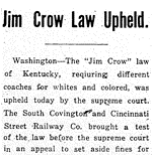
Erhart. *For the Sunny South. An Airship with a "Jim Crow" trailer* Illustration. Keppler & Schwarzmann, 26 February 1913. From Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Online Catalog. <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3b48958>



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