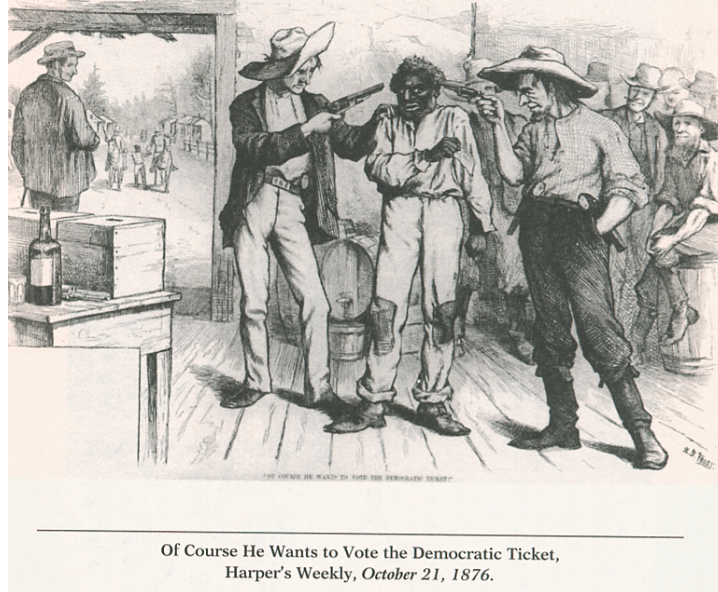


The Truth About Jim Crow

The American Civil Rights Union



The following points are taken from the American Civil Rights Union report, *The Truth About Jim Crow*, which seeks to remind Americans about the profound horror of the Jim Crow period.

I. Jim Crow was Dehumanizing: The Culture of Jim Crow

- Through segregation, belittling social customs, and denial of voting rights, the organizing principle of Jim Crow was driven home to blacks and whites alike: blacks are inferior to whites.
- Racial segregation was the very heart of Jim Crow. Explicitly racist laws kept blacks and whites apart everywhere from ballparks to graveyards to restaurants, buses and schools.
- A black male could not offer to shake hands with a white male because it implied social equality. Blacks addressed whites as “Mr.” or “Mrs.”; whites called blacks by their first names.
- Society treated blacks with gross disrespect. In a popular carnival game, “African Dodger,” a black man stuck his head through a hole in a canvas, and players threw balls at his head.
- Jim Crow states used a variety of stratagems, both legal and illegal, to deny blacks the vote, including all-white primaries, literacy tests, poll taxes, registration purges, and violence.
- In 1896, Louisiana had 130,334 registered black voters. In 1898, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a Mississippi law preventing blacks from voting. By 1904, only 1,342 blacks were still registered in Louisiana. In Georgia, poll taxes alone reduced black turnout by as much as half.

II. Jim Crow was Deadly: The Enforcement of Jim Crow

- Jim Crow social customs and voter denial were enforced by the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan flogged blacks until they promised not to vote Republican, and intimidated them with lynchings.
- At least ten percent of the black legislators elected during the 1867-1868 Southern state constitutional conventions became victims of violence, including seven who were killed.
- 535 blacks were lynched during the Reconstruction year of 1867 alone. At least 3,500 blacks were lynched during the Jim Crow years, and people were murdered right up to the mid-1960s.
- Many lynchings took place in broad daylight, right in the middle of major American cities. Lynchings often drew large crowds, and took place in carnival-like atmospheres.
- Most of the lynchings were by hanging or shooting, but many were of a more hideous nature: burning at the stake, maiming, dismemberment, and castration. Photos of lynchings were made into postcards and sent through the mails.

III. Jim Crow was Democratic: The Politics of Jim Crow

- Democrats were in complete control of the South during the entire Jim Crow era, from 1877 through 1965. Jim Crow's political purpose was to keep "the white man's party" in power.
- The Ku Klux Klan functioned as the paramilitary wing of the Democratic Party, and was used to drive Republicans out of the South during the Reconstruction period.
- While serving as the first Grand Wizard, or chief executive, of the KKK, Nathan Bedford Forrest was a delegate to the 1868 Democratic National Convention.
- Democrats resisted, blocked and repealed Republican civil rights and anti-lynching laws throughout the Jim Crow era, including repeal of the GOP's 1875 Civil Rights Act.
- In September 1957, Arkansas Democratic Governor Orval Faubus prevented the Little Rock Nine from entering Central High School. At the urging of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Republican President Dwight Eisenhower sent in the 101st Airborne Division to escort the black students.
- Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, D -Texas, blocked the GOP's 1956 civil rights bill, and gutted the 1957 Civil Rights Act. Democrats filibustered the GOP's 1960 Civil Rights Act.
- In 1963, Alabama Democratic Governor George Wallace personally blocked two black students attempting to enter the University of Alabama. Bull Connor, a member of the Democratic National Committee, turned fire hoses and dogs on peaceful Birmingham civil rights protestors.
- Senate Democrats, led by former KKK leader Robert Byrd, set a record by filibustering the 1964 Civil Rights Act for 57 days. Democrats later elected Byrd to be their Senate Majority Leader.