

Teaching Jim Crow

Defining Jim Crow

Challenging the myth: A system of segregation

Jim Crow



- ❑ Must help students understand that Jim Crow was more than a series of strict anti-black laws. It was a way of life.
 - ❑ List of typical Jim Crow laws
 - Barbers. No colored barber shall serve as a barber (to) white girls or women (Georgia).
 - Blind Wards. The board of trustees shall...maintain a separate building...on separate ground for the admission, care, instruction, and support of all blind persons of the colored or black race (Louisiana).
 - Burial. The officer in charge shall not bury, or allow to be buried, any colored persons upon ground set apart or used for the burial of white persons (Georgia).
 - ❑ **See “What Was Jim Crow?”** by Dr. David Pilgrim at <http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/>
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More than just a southern tradition

- The southern creed (Litwack, p. 181)
- “Every little southern town is a fine stage-set for Southern tradition to use as it teaches its children the twisting turning dance of segregation. Few words are needed for there are signs everywhere.
White....colored....white.....colored....over doors of railroad and bus stations, over doors of public toilets, over doors of theaters, over drinking fountains....And there are the invisible lines that turn and bend and cut the town into segments. Invisible, but electrically charged with taboo. Places you go, places you don't go. White town, colored town; white streets, colored streets, front door, back door. Places you sit. Places you cannot sit...These ceremonials in honor of white supremacy. See Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream* (1948; rpt, New York: Norton, 1978), 95-96

Race and Place



A system of white supremacy

- Economics
 - Politics
 - Social
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"The Tripartite System of Racial Domination"

(Aldon Morris, Author of The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement)

□ 1) The Economy of Jim Crow

- Sharecropping and tenant farming
 - A contract labor system
 - Crop liens
 - Involuntary Servitude: “a system of state laws aimed at making it possible for individuals and local governments to acquire and hold black labor.”
 - Peonage
 - Vagrancy laws
 - Enticement statutes
 - Criminal-surety system
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Sharecropper Contract, 1882

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/acpstah/unitdocs/unit6/lesson3/sharecropper.pdf>

<http://chnm.gmu.edu/acpstah/unitdocs/unit6/lesson3/mapcontractquestions.pdf>

To every one applying to rent land upon shares, the following conditions must be read, and agreed to.

To every 30 and 35 acres, I agree to furnish the team, plow, and farming implements . . . The croppers are to have half of the cotton, corn, and fodder (and peas and pumpkins and potatoes if any are planted) if the following conditions are complied with, but-if not-they are to have only two-fifths (2/5) . . . All must work under my direction.

. . . No cropper is to work off the plantation when there is any work to be done on the land he has rented, or when his work is needed by me or other croppers.

. . . Every cropper must feed or have fed, the team he works, Saturday nights, Sundays, and every morning before going to work, beginning to feed his team (morning, noon, and night every day in the week) on the day he rents and feeding it to including the 31st day of December. . .for every time he so fails he must pay me five cents.

The sale of every cropper's part of the cotton to be made by me when and where I choose to sell, and after deducting all they owe me and all sums that I may be responsible for on their accounts, to pay them their half of the net proceeds. Work of every description, particularly the work on fences and ditches, to be done to my satisfaction, and must be done over until I am satisfied that it is done as it should be.

SOURCE: Grimes Family Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, in Robert D. Marcus and David Burner, eds., *America Firsthand* (1992), pp. 306—308.

The life of a Peon in the South

- “Now the [African American] is as helpless as a child, and is still as thoughtless of the morrow. The merchant who has a lien on his share of the crop pays his taxes, buries his wife or child, buys him a mule if he needs one, and feeds and clothes him and his family to the extent that his improvidence and laziness are allowed credit. The high prices that the tenant pays for supplies are partly due to his untrustworthiness.” George K. Holmes, “The Peons of the South,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 4 (Sept., 1893): 71
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“The Life Story of a Negro Peon”

- When I saw these men in shackles, and the guards with their guns, I was scared nearly to death. I felt like running away, but I didn't know where to go. And if there had been any place to go to, I would have had to leave my wife and child behind. We free laborers held a meeting. We all wanted to quit. We sent a man to tell the Senator about it. Word came back that we were all under contract for ten years and that the Senator would hold us to the letter of the contract, or put us in chains and lock us up--the same as the other prisoners. It was made plain to us by some white people we talked to that in the contracts we had signed we had all agreed to be locked up in a stockade at night or at any other time that our employer saw fit; further, we learned that we could not lawfully break our contract for any reason and go and hire ourselves to somebody else without the consent of our employer; and, more than that, if we got mad and ran away, we could be run down by bloodhounds, arrested without process of law, and be returned to our employer, who, according to the contract, might beat us brutally or administer any kind of punishment that he thought proper. In other words, we had sold ourselves into slavery--and what could we do about it? The white folks had all the courts, all the guns, all the hounds, all the railroads, all the telegraph wires, all the newspapers, all the money, and nearly all the land--and we had only our ignorance, our poverty and our empty hands. We decided that the best thing to do was to shut our mouths, say nothing, and go back to work.

Working on a chain gang

- ❑ Chain Gangs and the Convict Lease System (Litwack, pp. 271-279)
- ❑ Why?



SCENES IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA.

Taken from the third chapter of "The Reason why the colored American is not in the World's Columbian Exposition," published in 1893

- ... the convicts are leased out to work for railway contractors, mining companies and those who farm large plantations. These companies assume charge of the convicts, work them as cheap labor and pay the states a handsome revenue for their labor...
 - ..[The] reason our race furnishes so large a share of the convicts is that the judges, juries and other officials of the courts are white men who share these prejudices. They also make the laws. It is wholly in their power to extend clemency to white criminals and mete severe punishment to black criminals for the same or lesser crimes. The Negro criminals are mostly ignorant, poor and friendless. Possessing neither money to employ lawyers nor influential friends, they are sentenced in large numbers to long terms of imprisonment for petty crimes.
 - ...Every Negro so sentenced not only means able-bodied men to swell the state's number of slaves, but every Negro so convicted is thereby *disfranchised*.
 - <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/fredouconlea.html>
-

Jackson Weekly Clarion, printed in 1887 the inspection report of the state prison in Mississippi:

- "We found [in the hospital section] twenty-six inmates, all of whom have been lately brought there off the farms and railroads, many of them with consumption and other incurable diseases, and all bearing on their persons marks of the most inhuman and brutal treatment. Most of them have their backs cut in great wales, scars and blisters, some with the skin peeling off in pieces as the result of severe beatings.

Their feet and hands in some instances show signs of frostbite, and all of them with the stamp of manhood almost blotted out of their faces.... They are lying there dying, some of them on bare boards, so poor and emaciated that their bones almost come through their skin, many complaining for the want of food.... We actually saw live vermin crawling over their faces, and the little bedding and clothing they have is in tatters and stiff with filth.

As a fair sample of this system, on January 6, 1887, 204 convicts were leased to McDonald up to June 6, 1887, and during this six months 20 died, and 19 were discharged and escaped and 23 were returned to the walls disabled and sick, many of whom have since died."

<http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/history/creating2.htm>

The Politics of Jim Crow

- Disfranchisement, Violence, and Political Intimidation
 - Disfranchisement was a two part process: Legal and extra-legal
 - **Legal disfranchisement**
 - Disfranchisement Laws had to be carefully crafted to avoid 15th amendment, they could not explicitly use race as a barrier to voting
 - Poll Taxes
 - Grandfather Clauses
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The State of Louisiana

Literacy Test (This test is to be given to anyone who cannot prove a fifth grade education.)

Do what you are told to do in each statement, nothing more, nothing less. Be careful as one wrong answer denotes failure of the test. You have 10 minutes to complete the test.

1. Draw a line around the number or letter of this sentence.
2. Draw a line under the last word in this line.
3. Cross out the longest word in this line.
4. Draw a line around the shortest word in this line.
5. Circle the first, first letter of the alphabet in this line.
6. In the space below draw three circles, one inside (engulfed by) the other.

7. Above the letter X make a small cross.
8. Draw a line through the letter below that comes earliest in the alphabet.

Z V S B D M K I T P H C

9. Draw a line through the two letters below that come last in the alphabet.

Z V B D M K T P H S Y C

10. In the first circle below write the last letter of the first word beginning with "L".



11. Cross out the number necessary, when making the number below one million.

10000000000

12. Draw a line from circle 2 to circle 5 that will pass below circle 2 and above circle 4.



13. In the line below cross out each number that is more than 20 but less than 30.

31 16 48 29 53 47 22 37 98 26 20 25

Evading the 15th Amendment

- ❑ Mississippi-1889
- ❑ Constitutional convention adopted complex voting requirements
- ❑ Voting required proof of residency, payment of all taxes (including a 2 dollar poll tax). A person convicted of arson, bigamy, petty theft, could not vote. Voters had to be literate. With one exception - illiterate men could vote if they demonstrated that they understood the Constitution when the document was read to them.
- ❑ South Carolina - 1895
 - Followed Mississippi's lead and created an "understanding clause"
- ❑ Louisiana's twist - 1898
 - Its "grandfather clause" stipulated that only men eligible to vote before 1867 - or whose father or grandfather had been eligible to vote before that year- would be qualified to vote.
- ❑ "Escape" clauses necessary -- why?

Political life after disfranchisement

- ❑ Blacks forced out of traditional “politics” -- but did they stop acting politically?
 - ❑ The “private” became the center of black political life
 - ❑ The Black Church
 - They were political institutions
 - ❑ The “community center”
 - ❑ No clear distinction between the secular and the sacred -- the spiritual and the political School
 - ❑ The School
 - Sites of black initiative and empowerment
 - ❑ The school not just a place to learn the three R’s; but, a place to learn about their rights and the importance of voting
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The Politics of Violence

Race riot or massacre?:

- ❑ Wilmington, N. C. (1898), Atlanta, Ga. (1906), Springfield, Ill. (1908), East St. Louis, Ill. (1917), Chicago, Ill. (1919), Tulsa, Okla. (1921)
 - ❑ Who sparked the riot. Did whites attack blacks? Did blacks attack whites? What offenses were alleged?
 - ❑ What were the social/political/economic conditions that prevailed at the time of the riot/massacre. (Consider elections, migration/social changes, wartime/post-war adjustment, and/or economic depression).
 - ❑ What role did rumors play in causing the riot/massacre?
 - ❑ What role did the police force play as a precipitating cause or perpetuating factor in the riot/massacre.
 - ❑ Where did the majority of the fighting occur -- within the black or white community?
 - ❑ http://www.jimcrowhistory.org/resources/pdf/hs_es_urban_race_riots.pdf;
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4975/> (Chicago);
<http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/4978> (Chicago);
<http://homicide.northwestern.edu/crimes/raceriot/>
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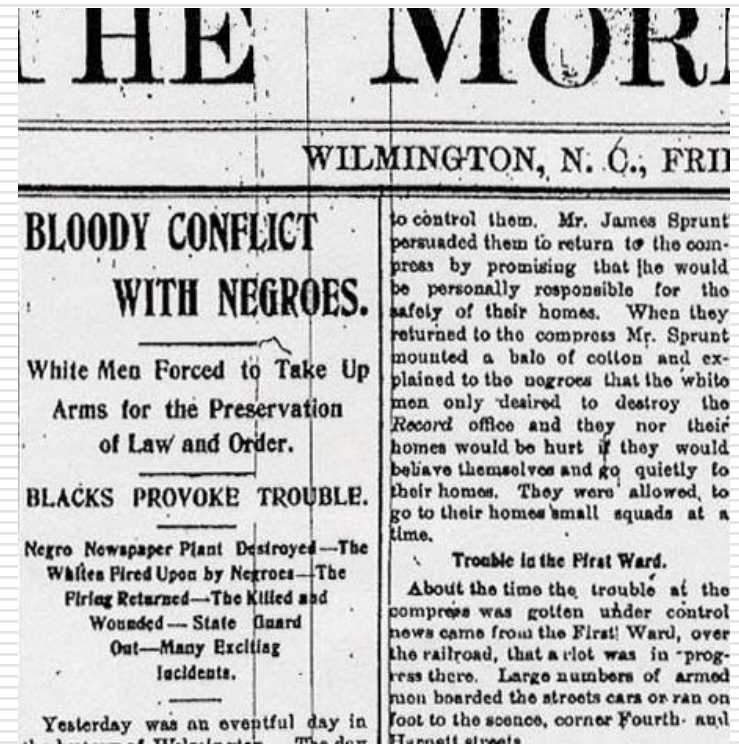
Consider multiple perspectives: The Wilmington Massacre

J. Allen Kirk. A Statement of Facts Concerning the Bloody Riot in Wilmington, N.C. Of Interest to Every Citizen of the United States.

- ❑ Firing began, and it seemed like a mighty battle in war time. The shrieks and screams of children, of mothers, of wives were heard, such as caused the blood of the most inhuman person to creep. Thousands of women, children and men rushed to the swamps and there lay upon the earth in the cold to freeze and starve. The woods were filled with colored people. The streets were dotted with their dead bodies. A white gentleman said that he saw ten bodies lying in the undertakers office at one time. Some of their bodies were left lying in the streets until up in the next day following the riot. Some were found by the stench and miasma that came forth from their decaying bodies under their houses. Every colored man who passed through the streets had either to be guarded by one of the crowd or have a paper (pass) giving him the right to pass.
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A second perspective

“Rise, ye sons of Carolina”
(Wilmington Messenger, 8 Nov. 1898)
Rise ye sons of Carolina
Proud Caucasians, one and all;
Be not deaf to Love’s appealing --
Hear your wives and daughters call
See their blanched and anxious faces,
Note their frail, but lovely forms
Rise, defend their spotless virtue
With your strong and manly arms



The Morning Star, Nov.
1898

Consider how African Americans Responded to anti-black violence (after WWI)

□ Complex factor: WWI

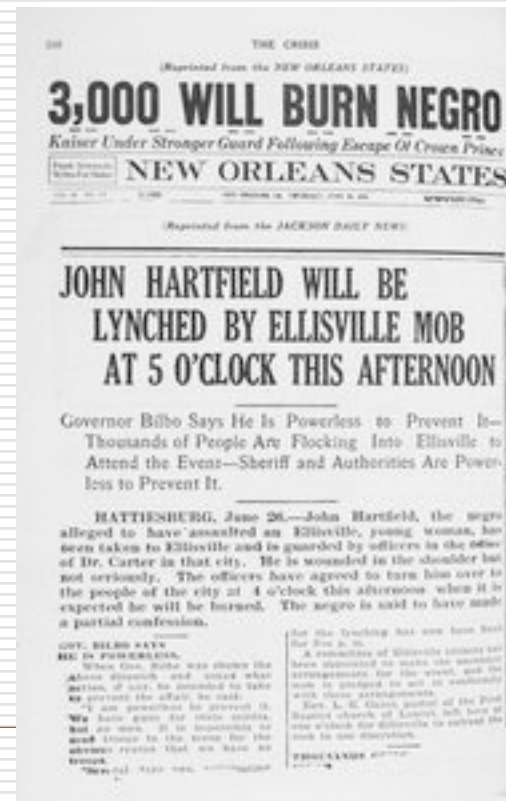
- W.E. B. Dubois “Returning Soldiers” May 1919
 - “We are returning from war! *The Crisis* and tens of thousands of black men were drafted into a great struggle. For bleeding France and what she means and has meant and will mean to us and humanity and against the threat of German race arrogance, we fought gladly and to the last drop of blood; for America and her highest ideals, we fought in far-off hope; for the dominant southern oligarchy entrenched in Washington, we fought in bitter resignation. For the America that represents and gloats in lynching, disfranchisement, caste, brutality and devilish insult—for this, in the hateful upturning and mixing of things, we were forced by vindictive fate to fight also.
 - But today we return! We return from the slavery of uniform which the world's madness demanded us to don to the freedom of civil garb. We stand again to look America squarely in the face and call a spade a spade. We sing: This country of ours, despite all its better souls have done and dreamed, is yet a shameful land.”
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- Red Summer
 - “If We Must Die” (1919) Claude McKay

□ If we must die, let it not be like hogs
Hunted and penned in an inglorious spot,
While round us bark the mad and hungry dogs,
Making their mock at our accursed lot.
If we must die, O let us nobly die,
So that our precious blood may not be shed
In vain; then even the monsters we defy
Shall be constrained to honor us though dead!
O kinsmen we must meet the common foe!
Though far outnumbered let us show us brave,
And for their thousand blows deal one deathblow!
What though before us lies the open grave?
Like men we'll face the murderous, cowardly pack,
Pressed to the wall, dying, but fighting back!

The spectacle of lynching

- ❑ Mutilation (emascaulation), burning, hanging, shooting and the final act of souvenir gathering.

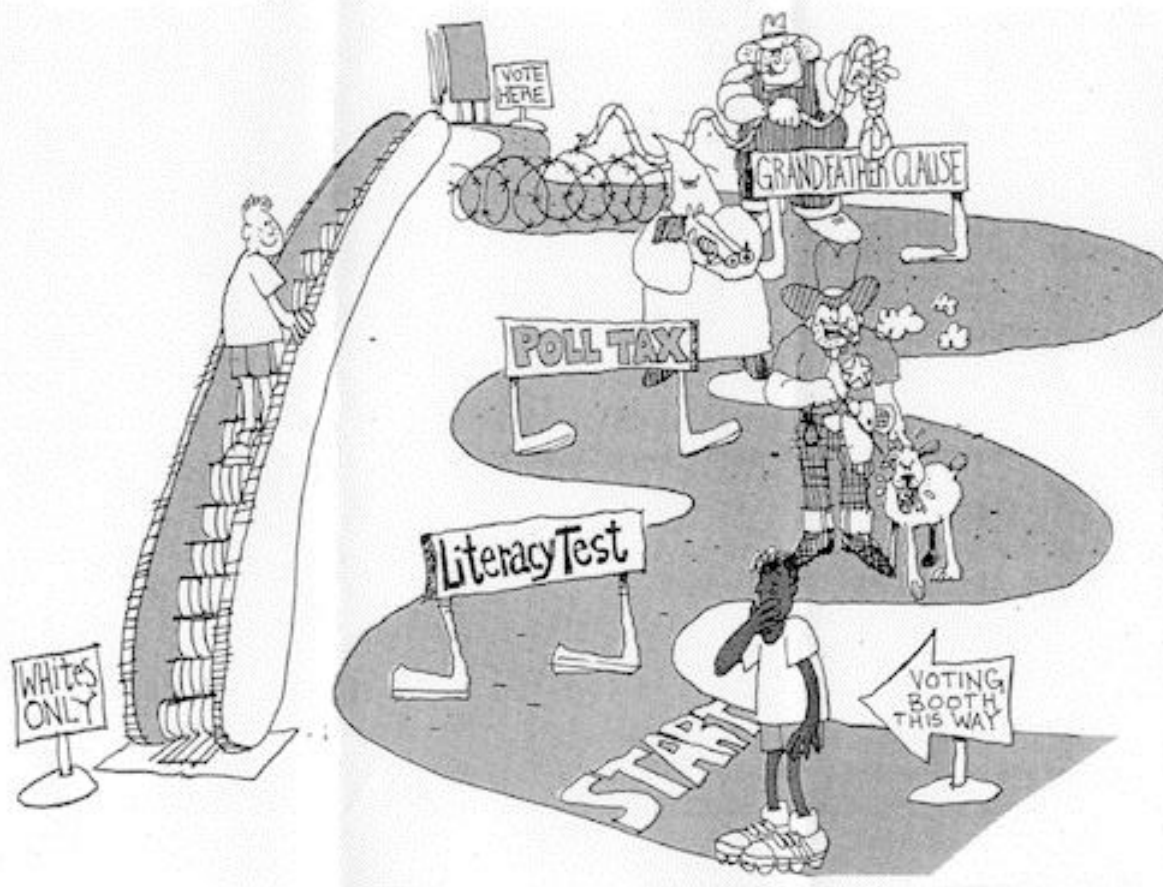


THE ULTIMATE ACT -- LYNCHING

- ❑ **Billie Holiday's Song "Strange Fruit" Lesson Plan**
 - ❑ <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/lesson-plans/lesson-4839.html>

 - ❑ "Strange Fruit"
 - ❑ <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/strangefruit/film.html>
 - ❑ Site includes review of film "Strange Fruit" and history of the song. Audio clip of song also available online.

 - ❑ Lyrics:
 - ❑ Southern trees bear strange fruit, Blood on the leaves and blood at the root, Black bodies swinging in the southern breeze, Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees. Pastoral scene of the gallant south, The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth, Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh, Then the sudden smell of burning flesh. Here is fruit for the crows to pluck, For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck, For the sun to rot, for the trees to drop, Here is a strange and bitter crop.
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The social world of Jim Crow

- ❑ The southern argument: black political equality would lead to black social equality.
 - ❑ Solution: Disfranchisement and Segregation (Litwack, pp. 220-221)
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Segregating trains

- From the end of Reconstruction to the turn of the century, southerners built RR more rapidly than Americans in any other region.
 - RR became the focus of late 19th century racial conflict
 - The problem of middle class black riders in first class cars -- why a problem?
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Jim Crow Cars

- The first segregation laws involved transportation -- why?
 - GA (1891); Montgomery (1900); Jacksonville (1901); Mobile (1902), Columbia SC, Houston, San Antonio (1903)
- Blacks resisted the new laws
 - Between 1891 and 1910, there were streetcar boycotts in at least 25 southern cities
- “So they are trying to get State laws passed to solve the awful problem, but can’t agree on a measure that will save them from contamination. One proposes separate cars entirely, but this, of course would impose great additional expense upon the companies and the latter are opposing the scheme. Why not compel the building of parallel roads, under separate and distinct companies and entirely different cars...? They might also put up gigantic screens all along the line so the representative race passengers can not see each other.” Indianapolis black newspaper, *Freeman*, January 21, 1905

The Memphis boycott

- “As yet, however, only a few of the race are seen in the ride [sic] The act is so humiliating that the better class of our folk seem to share in a feeling of mingled disgust and bewilderment, as if to ask themselves: Why this outrage, and what is to become of the people of the South? After 40 years of freedom and during all this time of indiscriminate passage through the thoroughfares of the great cities of the state, Tennessee imposed obloquy and shame upon those of her citizens whom she should encourage and lift up...Very many of the race are making their routes afoot, being rather ashamed of the disgrace and undecided as to their future action...Only a few days ago the street cars were overcrowded...But at present the capacity for travel is easy, and many of our people, through fear of maltreatment [at the hands of streetcar conductors] are walking while not a few prefer to walk rather than comply with the “Jim Crow” requirement.”

Plessy v. Ferguson

- ❑ 1892: Homer A. Plessy was 1/8 black and arrested for violating the new 1891 segregation law.
- ❑ In 1896 the U.S. Supreme Court upheld Louisiana's segregation statute.
 - (for more see Litwack, pp. 243-244)



African-American Responses: The culture of Resistance

□ Accommodation vs Resistance?

■ Booker T. Washington and W.E. B. DuBois

□ The Atlanta Compromise Speech of 1895 (see <http://historymatters.gmu.edu> for document)

□ Black response to BTW (see Litwack p. 419 and 423)

□ Ambivalence of whites regarding black education (see Litwack pp 90-91, 95-102)

□ "Of Mr. Booker T. Washington and Others" published within *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903) (see <http://historymatters.gmu.edu> for document)

□ "As I came to see it," said DuBois, "Washington bartered away much that was not his to barter. Certainly I did not believe that the skills of an artisan bricklayer, plasterer, or shoemaker, and the good farmer would cause the white South, grimly busy with disfranchisement and separation, to change the direction of things. I realized the need for what Washington was doing. Yet it seemed to me he was giving up essential ground that would be hard to win back. I don't think Washington saw this until the last years of his life. He kept hoping. But before he died he must have known that he and his hopes had been rejected and that he had, without so intending, helped make stronger -- and more fiercely defended -- a separation and rejection that made a mockery of all he had hoped and dreamed. I felt grief for him when I learned of his death because I believe he died in sorrow and a sense of betrayal."

<http://www.theatlantic.com/unbound/flashbks/black/mcgillbh.htm>

Double Consciousness

“After the Egyptian and Indian, the Greek and Roman, the Teuton and Mongolian, the Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second-sight in this American world,—a world which yields him no true self-consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness,—an American, a Negro; two warring souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. ...”

The Souls of Black Folk (1903)

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/church/dubois souls/menu.html>

Jim Crow etiquette

- A black male could not offer his hand (to shake hands) with a white male because it implied being socially equal.

Blacks and whites were not supposed to eat together. If they did eat together, whites were to be served first.

Whites did not use courtesy titles of respect when referring to blacks, for example, Mr., Mrs., Miss., Sir, or Ma'am. Instead, blacks were called by their first names. Blacks had to use courtesy titles when referring to whites, and were not allowed to call them by their first names.

If a black person rode in a car driven by a white person, the black person sat in the back seat or the back of a truck.

White motorists had the right-of-way at all intersections.

African-American Responses: The Culture of Resistance

- **Wearing the Mask**
 - Paul Laurence Dunbar's (1872-1906) poem "We Wear the Mask" (1896)
 - WE wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes,—
This debt we pay to human guile;
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile,
And mouth with myriad subtleties.
 - Why should the world be over-wise,
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
 We wear the mask.
 - We smile, but, O great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.
We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile;
But let the world dream otherwise,
 We wear the mask!
 - **"Behind the veil" (Du Bois)**
 - **Accommodation vs. submission (See Litwack, pp.431-434)**
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Jim Crow and Consumer culture

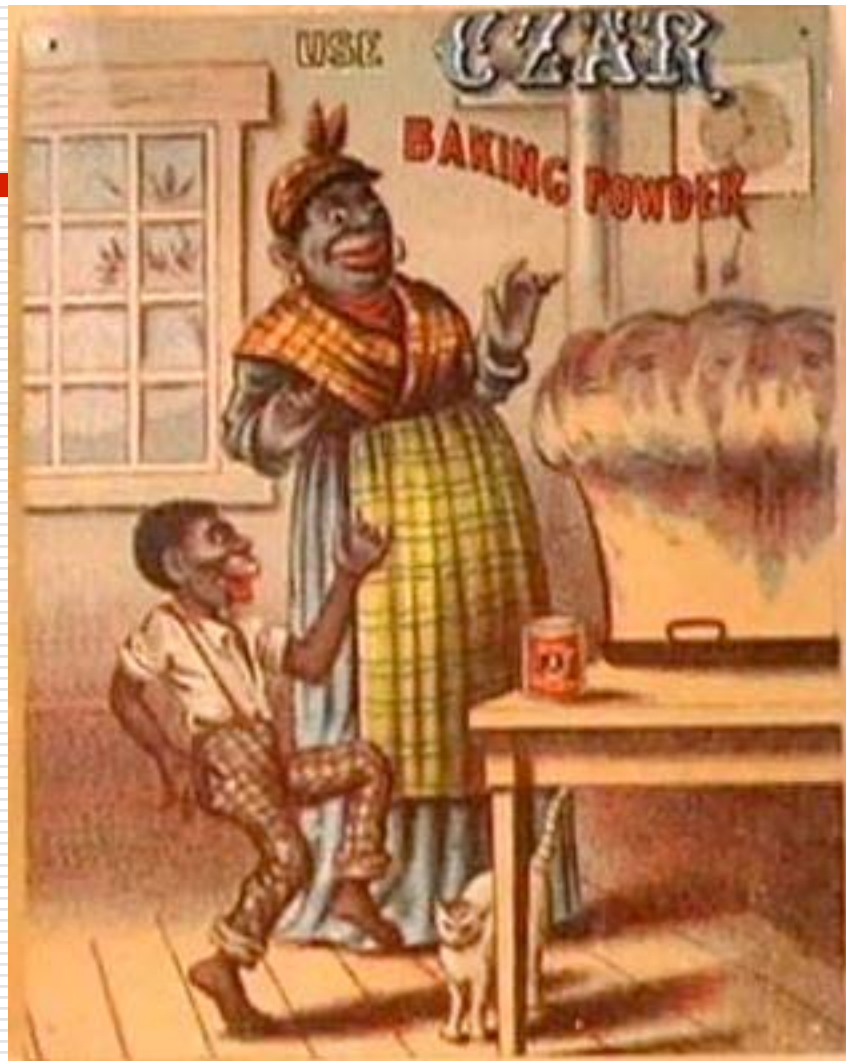
Creating a modern consumer culture

- The marking of racial difference on consumer culture
 - The south NOT an exception -- not a section apart from the nation or national culture.
 - Memorializing the contented slave
 - Nostalgia for the “good ole days”
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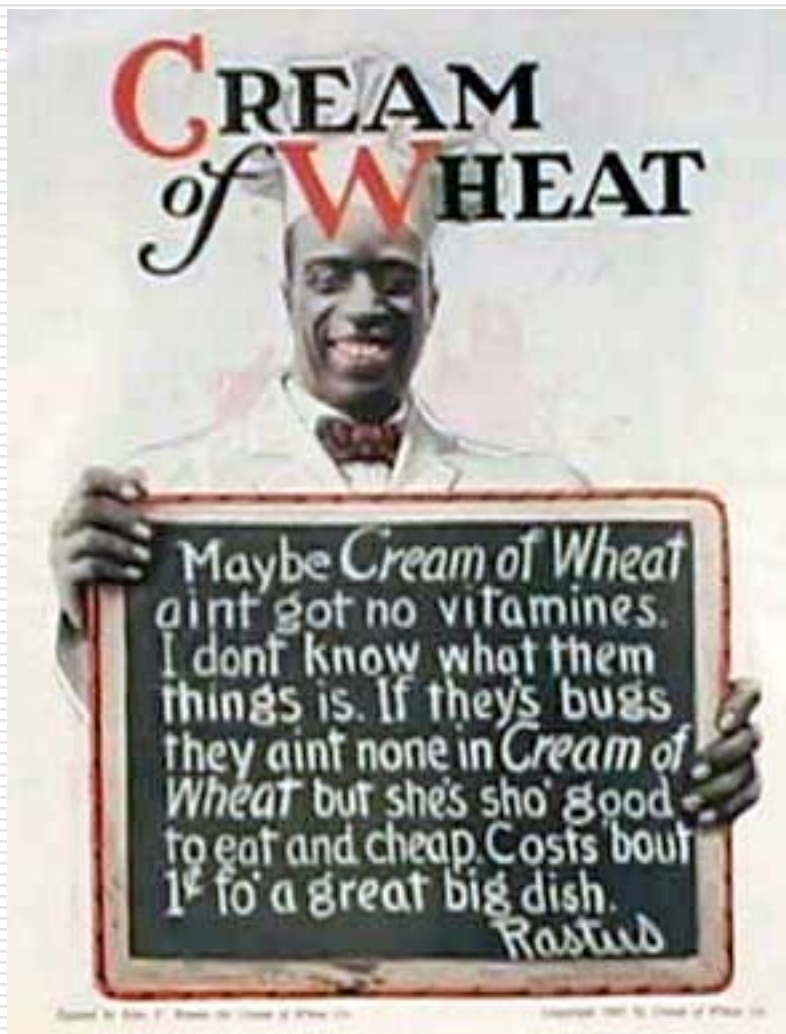
Selling “old mammy”

- Who was mammy in the southern white mind?
 - The Old Negro vs. the New Negro (Litwack, pp. 185-186, 203-205)
 - Aunt Jemima
 - Selling stereotyped representations of blackness became crucial to the development of mass entertainment in the late 19th century.
 - The consumer, the viewer, became more self-consciously white.
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<http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/mammies/>



Bringing it all together

- Guiding question: In what ways did African Americans resist the (political, economic, and social) oppressive structures of Jim Crow America?
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Please note this presentation is for workshop purposes only.

Please address all source inquiries to the presenter: Wendi N. Manuel-Scott