



Remembering Jim Crow: Student Exercises

Answer Key

Critical Thinking

The following questions are based on Part 2 of the documentary. Teachers may choose to use the [script](#). [Listen to Part 2](#) (19:29)

1. Describe one circumstance where the “color line” was strictly enforced in the Jim Crow South and one circumstance where it was not enforced. What do you think accounts for this inconsistency?

Black and white people were not allowed to marry each other, but white men often had black mistresses.

2. If you were an African American citizen living under Jim Crow, would you look to the police for protection? Why or why not?

Generally not—the documentary provides examples of the police enforcing Jim Crow and thereby jeopardizing the safety of African Americans.

3. What did W.E.B. DuBois mean when he said that African Americans lived “behind the veil”? How did living behind the veil protect and nurture Black communities?

DuBois meant that African Americans constructed their own communities (churches, schools, social clubs) in order to create a separate world from whites. They concealed their true thoughts and feelings as a way to protect themselves and avoid antagonizing whites.

4. Why was World War II a turning point in the history of both Jim Crow and the civil rights movement in America?

More than a million blacks fought in the United States military during World War II. As Darlene Clark Hine said, “If they could die for freedom abroad, they could die for freedom at home.”

5. The action taken by Otis Pinkert was one episode of African American resistance to Jim Crow. How do you think actions like Pinkert’s contributed to the broader civil rights struggle of the 1950s and ‘60s?

Many small, individual acts of resistance accumulated and encouraged others to join the civil rights movement during these years.



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The following questions are based on Part 3 of the documentary. Teachers may choose to use the [audio](#) or [transcript](#). [Listen to Part 3](#) (19:29)

1. What evidence does Mary Laveaux use to support her claim that black people in her community were “poor, but happy” under Jim Crow?

She pointed out they sang and danced joyfully, that white employers treated them well, and that “nothing bothered them.”

2. What lesson did Henry Dauterive learn in his family’s kitchen when he was seven years old? Why do you think rules like the one he learned existed under Jim Crow?

He learned that, as a white boy, he could not openly express affection for black people.

3. How did Henry Dauterive’s views of Jim Crow change when he went to college? How permanent were these changes?

At college he began to question the validity of Jim Crow, going so far as to challenge his grandfather on the subject of white intellectual superiority. While he “crossed the line” a few times to bring blacks and whites together, he did not abandon the idea that blacks were inferior to whites.

4. What does anthropologist Kate Ellis mean when she says that many of the older white people she interviewed “recognized the injustice of Jim Crow but feel no particular remorse”? How do the comments of Deanne and Smitty Landry reflect this attitude?

The older white people she interviewed thought that Jim Crow was “just the way things were.” The Landrys are certain that Jim Crow is “dead and gone,” and that any attention to past discrimination is a waste of time.

5. How do Kate Ellis’s interviews with older African Americans tell a different story than do her interviews with older white people? Whose observations do you consider more reliable? Why?

Older African Americans don’t agree that Jim Crow is dead. They still feel the effects of racism and the pain of having lived under Jim Crow.