

Tune in!

MANUEL → P. 88-89

Observe and react: Jim Crow laws

Read the short texts below.

A. Definition

After the American Civil War most states in the South passed¹ laws that discriminated against African Americans. The Jim Crow laws were state and local laws enacted between 1876 and 1965. They established segregation in all public facilities², with a "separate but equal" status for black Americans and members of other non-white racial groups.

1. votèrent 2. équipements

B. Everyday life under the Jim Crow laws

Jim Crow laws imposed second-class citizenship¹ on African Americans and other non-Whites. Public schools, trains and buses were segregated. Facilities such as restaurants, theaters, hotels, cinemas, public baths and swimming-pools were separate. In many states marriage between Whites and African American people was banned. Besides, Jim Crow customs could be even harsher² than laws. Black men, for example, knew that avoiding physical contact with white women was not sufficient; the simple act of making eye contact, or offering to light a cigarette, was considered an abomination by Whites.

Every day Blacks endured many other humiliations: Whites addressed Blacks by their first names, "boy" or "girl," or "nigger" while black people had to address Whites as "Mr" or "Mrs". If a white customer was present, Blacks were never served first.

In some states, the unwritten rules could easily end up in insult, beating, or lynching.

Violence against black people spread across the South until the 1930s. During the Jim Crow era, the word lynching meant mob³ violence against Blacks, punishment without the sanction of justice or torture and it triggered⁴ sudden urban race riots⁵ in different parts of the country. Quite often the crimes committed by Blacks were exaggerated or even completely unfounded.

1. citoyenneté 2. harder 3. hostile crowd 4. déclencha 5. émeutes

ACTION!

Explain why living under the Jim Crow laws was a terrible experience:

federal – from... to... – establish – be separated / segregated – daily life – customs – such as... (tel que) – be forbidden to... – second-class citizen – victim – unfair – degrading – humiliating – intimidation – deterrent effect (effet dissuasif) – inferior