

Drawing the Colour Line

This week, we will trace the colour line that racially segregated the United States of America during the late-nineteenth and early-to-middle twentieth centuries. In this process, we will debate the controversial practice of *blackface* and introduce ourselves to *Jim Crow laws* and the ensuing *civil rights movement* led by *Martin Luther King, Jr.* whose writing we will analyze.

Blackface

Debate: Is blackface acceptable? Why or why not?

Yes	No

Jim Crow Laws

1. What did Leslie V. Tischauser mean when he wrote “attitudes, and history, not laws, created . . . separation”?

2. What were the governing idea of Jim Crow laws, and what did it justify?

3. Why did the most common laws illegalize interracial marriage and racially segregate patrons?

Take the 1965 Alabama Literacy Test!

1. Which of the following is a right guaranteed by the Bill of Rights?

☐ Public Education ☐ Employment
☐ Voting ☐ Trial by Jury

2. The federal census of population is taken each five years.

☐ True ☐ False

3. Which definition applies to the word "amendment?"

☐ Proposed change, as in a Constitution
☐ Making of peace between nations at war
☐ A part of the government

4. To serve as President of the United States, a person must have attained:

☐ 25 ☐ 35 ☐ 40 ☐ 45 years

5. The Supreme Court is the chief lawmaking body of the state.

☐ True ☐ False

6. When a jury has heard and rendered a verdict in a case, and the judgment on the verdict has become final, the defendant cannot again be brought to trial for the same cause.

☐ True ☐ False

7. Communism was the type of government in:

☐ U.S. ☐ Russia ☐ England

8. Of which branch of government is the Speaker of the House a part?

☐ Executive ☐ Legislative
☐ Judicial

9. Capital punishment is the giving of a death sentence.

☐ True ☐ False

10. "Involuntary servitude" is permitted in the U.S. upon conviction of a crime.

☐ True ☐ False

11. Which of the following is a right guaranteed by the Bill of Rights of the U.S. Constitution?

☐ Public Housing ☐ Education
☐ Voting ☐ Trial by Jury

12. The Legislatures of the states decide how presidential elector may be chosen.

☐ True ☐ False

13. Of which branch of government is a Supreme Court justice a part?

☐ Executive ☐ Legislative
☐ Judicial

14. If no person receives a majority of the election votes, the Vice President is chosen by the Senate.

☐ True ☐ False

15. Check the offenses which, if you are convicted of them, disqualify you for voting:

☐ Murder
☐ Issuing worthless checks
☐ Petty larceny
☐ Manufacturing whiskey

16. The Congress decides in what manner states elect presidential electors.

_____ True _____ False

17. Money is coined by order of:

- _____ U.S. Congress
- _____ The President's Cabinet
- _____ State Legislatures

Score: _____ / 17

The Civil Rights Movement and Martin Luther King, Jr.

In light of what he said and did during the Montgomery bus boycott, what made King a great leader?

Leadership Quality	Example

4. Why did the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) Andrew Young remark that King's decision to go to jail was "the beginning of [King's] true leadership"?

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5. Why was the recruitment of students vital to the success of the Birmingham Campaign?

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6. How did the Birmingham Campaign exemplify G.W. Hegel's dialectical method of analysis?

Thesis:

Antithesis:

Synthesis:

"Letter From Birmingham Jail"

In *Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement*, John A. Kirk, lauded King's "Letter From Birmingham Jail" as one of his "most eloquent and thoughtful defences of the use of non-violence and civil disobedience. We will analyze excerpts from the letter below.

But more basically, I am in Birmingham because injustice is here. Just as the prophets of the eighth century B.C. left their villages and carried their "thus saith the Lord" far beyond the boundaries of their home towns, and just as the Apostle Paul left his village of Tarsus and carried the gospel of Jesus Christ to the far corners of the Greco Roman world, so am I compelled to carry the gospel of freedom beyond my own home town. Like Paul, I must constantly respond to the Macedonian call for aid.

7. How does King elevate the Birmingham Campaign?

You may well ask: "Why direct action? Why sit ins, marches and so forth? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are quite right in calling for negotiation. Indeed, this is the very purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and foster such a tension that a community which has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored. My citing the creation of tension as part of the work of the nonviolent resister may sound rather shocking. But I must confess that I am not afraid of the word "tension." I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth. Just as Socrates felt that it was necessary to create a tension in the mind so that individuals could rise from the bondage of myths and half truths to the unfettered realm of creative analysis and objective appraisal, so must we see the need for nonviolent gadflies to create the kind of tension in society that will help men rise from the dark depths of prejudice and racism to the majestic heights of understanding and brotherhood. The purpose of our direct action program is to create a situation so crisis packed that it will inevitably open the door to negotiation. I therefore concur with you in your call for negotiation. Too long has our beloved Southland been bogged down in a tragic effort to live in monologue rather than dialogue.

8. What is King's rationale for taking direct action?

We have waited for more than 340 years for our constitutional and God given rights. The nations of Asia and Africa are moving with jetlike speed toward gaining political independence, but we still creep at horse and buggy pace toward gaining a cup of coffee at a lunch counter. Perhaps it is easy for those who have never felt the stinging darts of segregation to say, "Wait." But when you have seen vicious mobs lynch your mothers and fathers at will and drown your sisters and brothers at whim; when you have seen hate filled

policemen curse, kick and even kill your black brothers and sisters; when you see the vast majority of your twenty million Negro brothers smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society; when you suddenly find your tongue twisted and your speech stammering as you seek to explain to your six year old daughter why she can't go to the public amusement park that has just been advertised on television, and see tears welling up in her eyes when she is told that Funtown is closed to colored children, and see ominous clouds of inferiority beginning to form in her little mental sky, and see her beginning to distort her personality by developing an unconscious bitterness toward white people; when you have to concoct an answer for a five year old son who is asking: "Daddy, why do white people treat colored people so mean?"; when you take a cross county drive and find it necessary to sleep night after night in the uncomfortable corners of your automobile because no motel will accept you; when you are humiliated day in and day out by nagging signs reading "white" and "colored"; when your first name becomes "nigger," your middle name becomes "boy" (however old you are) and your last name becomes "John," and your wife and mother are never given the respected title "Mrs."; when you are harried by day and haunted by night by the fact that you are a Negro, living constantly at tiptoe stance, never quite knowing what to expect next, and are plagued with inner fears and outer resentments; when you are forever fighting a degenerating sense of "nobodiness"--then you will understand why we find it difficult to wait. There comes a time when the cup of endurance runs over, and men are no longer willing to be plunged into the abyss of despair. I hope, sirs, you can understand our legitimate and unavoidable impatience. You express a great deal of anxiety over our willingness to break laws. This is certainly a legitimate concern. Since we so diligently urge people to obey the Supreme Court's decision of 1954 outlawing segregation in the public schools, at first glance it may seem rather paradoxical for us consciously to break laws. One may well ask: "How can you advocate breaking some laws and obeying others?" The answer lies in the fact that there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all."

9. Write a letter responding to King's. You may it as yourself or as a person who lived in the United States of America in 1963.

Handwriting practice lines consisting of 20 horizontal lines, each preceded by a short horizontal dash on the left margin.
