



Curriculum Units by Fellows of the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute
1996 Volume I: Multiculturalism and the Law

An Analysis of Jim Crow Laws and Their Effect on Race Relations

Guide for Curriculum Unit 96.01.01
by Jennifer Blue

It was my intention to devise a curriculum unit that would discuss Jim Crow laws and the effects of these laws on America. More importantly, I wished to convey to young students how laws based on discrimination can destroy the basic human spirit of all parties involved. Once the miserable truth is established about Jim Crow, through a mock segregation class experiment, and students gain a full understanding, a discussion will arise on the best route to embrace that would execute the alteration of unfair legislation (violence vs. non-violence). This element of the unit will employ many aspects of the New Haven Public School social development program, Project Charlie. Finally, the unit will draw parallels with the theme of non-violence during the Civil Rights Movement and the dismantling of Jim Crow with why the Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr. is deemed a hero.

This particular curriculum unit will focus on improving and increasing language skills of young learners, as well as teach an appreciation of literature and history. Students will engage in process writing. They will create lists, poems, stories, and illustrations generated from exposure to the material. Some of the literature in this unit includes the poetry of Langston Hughes that eloquently captures the injustice of Jim Crow.

This curriculum unit is an important one and must be handled delicately and accurately. It is crucial that young minds are aware of their history, take in the information, and construct meaning. A teacher has the responsibility to mold and shape critical thinkers. With an instructor who will facilitate learning, this unit will allow young minds to critically examine the effects of Jim Crow laws on American society.

(Recommended for Language Arts and Social Studies, grade 1)

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