



## The Lynching of Black People of the “Jim Crow” South in America

Student's Name

Institutional Affiliation

Course Number and Name

Instructor Name

Due Date

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The lynching of African Americans in the United States, especially in the Southern part, began after the Civil War during the Reconstruction Era (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). African Americans had just attained their freedom and were eager to exercise their new rights (Langley, 2014). However, they still faced numerous challenges, such as racial discrimination and violence from the majority race (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). As a result, local governments from the South established unjust regulations like the Jim Crow Laws to undermine the lives of African Americans, which promoted extrajudicial actions like lynching (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). This main purpose of this study is to analyze the lynching of African Americans of the “Jim Crow” South in America, explain how this effected the society, and determine how the information gathered can be used to dismantle racism today.

### Description of Lynching in Jim Crow South

The Jim Crow era, which started to ensure that black people did not interact with the whites, began in 1877 and ended in the mid-1960s (The University of Southern California, n.d.). As a result, people of color were not supposed to share the same public utilities like schools, prisons, and parks with the majority race (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). The amenities used by black people were inferior to the ones meant for the whites (The University of Southern California, n.d.). These differences enforced the idea of white superiority in the United States. According to the report by the Equal Justice Initiative (2015), African Americans who did not adhere to the Jim Crow Laws experienced brutal violence, such as lynching.

During the Jim Crow era, there were numerous accusations made against African Americans, which were rarely investigated to establish whether the accused was guilty or innocent (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). These cases were not presented to the judicial system, and as a result, black people were lynched for being alleged perpetrators of certain crimes. Some of the common accusations made were rape and murder. Although none of the victims of lynching were legally convicted of these crimes, thousands of them were killed and injured in Jim Crow South.

According to Langley (2014), the exact number of those individuals is difficult to determine because the mobs did not keep records.

### **Analysis of Lynching in Jim Crow South**

After the slaves had been freed, there was increasing racial tension in the United States. According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP; n.d), many whites thought that black people had to be controlled and were getting away with too much freedom. The whites blamed the freed slaves for the financial challenges they were experiencing after the Civil War. The NAACP (n.d.) states that violence against black people was a way for white communities to relieve their anger.

In addition, lynching occurred because white people saw African Americans as sexual predators (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). It was thought that African American men wanted to interact with white women to satisfy their sexual desires. As a result, the Jim Crow Laws were established to prevent the two groups from interacting. White people believed that they were protecting their women by lynching any person of color who failed to comply with the segregation rules (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). According to the NAACP (2015), rape accusations were the third greatest reason for the violence experienced by African Americans.

Additionally, black people were lynched for minor social transgressions. The Jim Crow Laws required black individuals to observe white supremacy in their communities (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). Therefore, African Americans were supposed to respect the members of the dominant race, use acceptable language, refrain from suing or arguing with them, and avoid bumping into white women. Failure to meet these social codes led to racially-based aggression (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). White people perceived such behaviors as acts of rebellion, and they were determined to keep the former slaves in check.

The lynching of African Americans was important to the dominant race as they saw it as a way to protect their social, economic, and political welfare (Equal Justice Initiative, 2015). They believed that undermining blacks would enhance their economic and political growth. In addition, white people wanted to prevent interracial sexual relationships because they considered black men to be inferior (NAACP, n.d.).

### **How Lynching of African Americans Affected the Way Society Evolved**

Lynching created a culture of violence between the two racial groups over the years (Finnegan, 2014). Even after the lynchings ended, black families felt the need to continue fighting for their rights and economic and social welfare. At the same time, the white communities attempted to restore their dominance over the minority race. The increasing violence against African Americans led to the emergence of a new generation of activists whose main agenda was to put an end to racial discrimination and violence (Finnegan, 2014). Over the years, African Americans have continued to fight for racial equality, but there are still cases of racial discrimination and inequality in today's society.

The lynchings of black people in Jim Crow South laid the groundwork for racial injustice and inequality in modern society (Taylor, 2019). During the Jim Crow era, many African Americans fled to the North, abandoning their homes, occupation, properties, and families (Taylor, 2019). As a result, the economic and social welfare of the already vulnerable community continued to deteriorate. According to Taylor (2019), many African-American communities are still marginalized and poor.

Lynchings of black people adversely impacted the evolution of the judicial system. African Americans are often presumed to be dangerous and guilty, even when they are innocent (Taylor, 2019). Black people are overrepresented in prisons and jails. Although they constitute only 13% of the total population in the United States, they make up 28% of all the arrested individuals (Taylor, 2019). The high rate of arrests is caused by implicit bias in policing. Of those arrested, 40% are incarcerated, while 42% are put on death row. These statistics show that the judicial system is biased against African Americans.

### **Reflection**

When doing this research, I have gained insights about racial discrimination and violence against black people in Jim Crow South America. I have understood how this historical event adversely impacted the social, economic, and political welfare of African Americans during the Jim Crow era. As a result, the already disadvantaged communities were forced to continue living in poverty. Some even became refugees in the North as they left the South to save their lives. Still, many African-American communities are marginalized. Their ability to exercise the economic freedom was limited by the widespread lynching incidents in the country.

In addition, I have learned that lynching contributed to the development of an unjust judicial system. The Jim Crow Laws supported the extrajudicial actions to be taken against African Americans. Since black people were presumed to be dangerous and guilty even when they were innocent, a culture of bias against them was established. Also, I have learned why African Americans often experience police brutality. I have gained insights into the overrepresentation of black people in jails and prisons.

### **Lessons Learned**

The lynching of African Americans shows the adverse impacts of racial segregation and violence. The effects of these aggressive acts can still be felt in modern society. African American communities are still marginalized and experience different forms of discrimination. Therefore, individuals need to understand that racism affects not only the current victims but also future generations. People should learn that racism negatively influences the social, economic, and political welfare of those communities. Therefore, they should formulate measures to dismantle racism and promote a positive evolution of society.