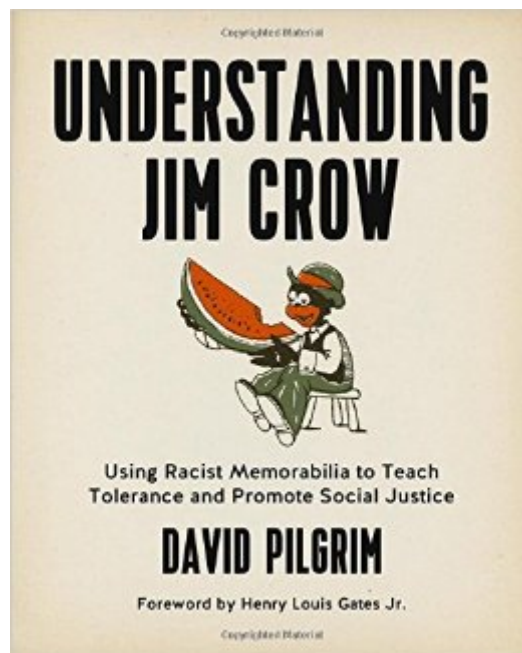


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# Understanding Jim Crow: Using Racist Memorabilia To Teach Tolerance And Promote Social Justice



## Synopsis

Selections of racist memorabilia from the collection at the Jim Crow Museum – A proper understanding of race relations in this country must include a solid knowledge of Jim Crow – how it emerged, what it was like, how it ended, and its impact on the culture. Understanding Jim Crow introduces readers to the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia, a collection of more than 10,000 contemptible collectibles that are used to engage visitors in intense and intelligent discussions about race, race relations, and racism. The items are offensive and they were meant to be offensive. The items in the Jim Crow Museum served to dehumanize Blacks and legitimized patterns of prejudice, discrimination, and segregation. Using racist objects as teaching tools seems counterintuitive – and, quite frankly, needlessly risky. Many Americans are already apprehensive discussing race relations, especially in settings where their ideas are challenged. The museum and this book exist to help overcome our collective trepidation and reluctance to talk about race. Fully illustrated, and with context provided by the museum's founder and director David Pilgrim, Understanding Jim Crow is both a grisly tour through America's past and an auspicious starting point for racial understanding and healing.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I was introduced to the Jim Crow Museum through a blog titled A Critical Review of The Help. I knew of Jim Crow but seeing the degrading objects and photos that had been used to depict African Americans over the years was shocking. Dr. Pilgrim takes the time to explain the various caricatures

used over the years to describe African-Americans and how they were used (usually mockingly) in advertising, TV, etc. It is well worth a read.

I wish I could give this book 10 stars. I am using this in my basic Gender Studies class where I introduce students to the power dynamics and mechanics used to create systems of discrimination and privilege which create inequalities. I use an intersectional approach, so begin with discussions of race, and then go on to gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, and class. This book helps teach about how concepts of race intersect with gender (men/masculinity and women/femininity) so students can understand where certain stereotypes about black men and women (Jezebel, Mammy, the dangerous black male thug...) came from, and WHY they were created and reinforced and circulated by the dominant group (whites). The students' understanding of the history helps me teach them how to see those same stereotypes today that are still found in TV, film, music, and news coverage of current events. The pictures of racist artifacts help students understand the intensity and level of common acceptance of racism by the dominant group for decades, as people used words, concepts, and artifacts with impunity, not thinking they were doing anything wrong. The images in this book shock my students, and many of them were angered that they had never learned about the pervasive and intense level of racism while studying American history in high school. They had all been taught that slavery was a horrible and unfortunate thing that happened a long time ago, but has no connection to anything today. This book, with its many images, forces people to question that history lesson. None of my WHITE students had ever heard the term "Jim Crow" before, so it was a real eye opener. They were left shaken, angry - BUT AWARE!!!! One of the methods used by the dominant group to maintain dominance is to hinder the transmission of stories that point out the constructions of inequality, or to erase them all together if possible. This book brings so much into the open with images that are often shocking and painful to look at, which FORCES the reader to ask questions and revisit their understanding of our history. The book is written in very accessible language, and makes clear how and why concepts were formed, and how they benefited white people. I would recommend this book to EVERYONE: Parents who want their children better informed, and teachers of ALL grades. I feel this book should be in every library as a resource, so have recommended my college's library purchase it. I plan to use this book every semester for my basic class and in others, for many years to come. The book also comes in an electronic form, which many students liked because they could then carry it around on their reader all the time. Because a reader is so easy to carry around, many of my students tell me they have shared this book with friends, which has sparked extended discussion and exploration outside of the

classroom. I can not thank Mr. Pilgrim enough for all of his work over the years, and for this exceptional book.

This painful, provocative, and genuine account of the racist historical depiction of black Americans opened my eyes to how propaganda is used to support erroneous ideology within our culture. The objects are difficult to comprehend and blatantly dehumanizing of black Americans, but Dr. Pilgrim eloquently guides the reader towards understanding how these objects of hate were used, while making the reader conscious of subtle ways these themes still present themselves in media today. Excellent and challenging project. Thank you Dr. Pilgrim

"Understanding Jim Crow" is a 2015 United States History/Social Studies book written by Doctor David Pilgrim - a former sociology professor and the curator of the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan. Dr. Pilgrim is also the author of such books as "Understanding Mental Health" and "Key Concepts in Mental Health". The theme of the book is anti-racism. The title "Understanding Jim Crow" says it all - Doctor Pilgrim takes a look at why exactly segregation and Jim Crow etiquette entered into United States society after slavery was banned. What led me to reading Dr. Pilgrim's book is that I am fascinated with bigotry. I grew up in a region that was infamous for racial prejudice and I have always been intrigued by who or what is forbidden. Doctor Pilgrim examines the origins of ethnic hatred towards African-Americans in the U.S.A. and every stereotype aimed at them since the 19th century - from the myth that all African-American men are potentially violent, to the opinion that black women are promiscuous or short-tempered, all the way to the belief that African-Americans are naturally lazy, uneducated, childish, simple-minded, linguistically-challenged and ignorant slobs who love watermelons and fried chicken. The book discusses how those caricatures came into existence and how the entertainment industry, the mainstream media and advertising companies promoted those perspectives that ultimately lead to the preconceived notions that millions of European-Americans have had towards African-Americans for well over one-hundred-and-fifty years. The way this book reads is like if you are at Doctor Pilgrim's exhibition and he is teaching you as each artifact in the building is shown. The book is filled with very disturbing pictures from the author's collection of antiques - from drawings of overly aggregated big and red-lipped, watermelon-holding, dark-skinned, bulging-eyed black men, to postcards, (such as one of an African-American man stealing chicken eggs while being chased by a dog) and personal belongings such as laundry detergent, kitchen supplies, tooth paste, a shaving mug, games, yard decorations, children's toys, fishing lures and more everyday

items Caucasians used that had stereotypical drawings of black people on them. The photographs match up with the text perfectly. One needs to view the material with their own eyes to fully see the impact of how openly intolerant United States society use to be towards African-Americans. If you're an Anglo-Saxon living in the early 20th century U.S.A. and you are surrounded with that kind of imagery, I believe you and many other Aryans are going to naturally and subconsciously feel superior to black people and fear them. The book also examines various films, cartoons and songs that dehumanized African-Americans. In conjunction with the racist items that were everywhere, the seeds of bigotry were thus planted into the minds of millions of white people who would later pass those beliefs into their children's psyches, who would then do the same to their own kids, and on and on. Popular culture's stereotypes of African-Americans rationalized black people's bureaucratic, public and budgetary persecution. It's no wonder why legalized racism was allowed for so long in the United States of America. Where I'm originally from some of the popular pastimes were church, high school football, country music, the State Fair and hating and mocking black people. I use to wonder why so many Nordics in my hometown would openly use the "N" word and make racist jokes. There were literally no African-Americans around, so what on earth had black people done that caused the fair-skinned citizens there to hate and fear them so much? This book answered that question. When reading the book, white people should ask themselves if they have ever been guilty of stereotyping black people. i.e. If you're walking down a public road and you see a group of black men walking towards you, do you cross the street? Or have you ever met an African-American whom you felt didn't act like a "typical" black person? "Understanding Jim Crow" by Dr. Pilgrim is the best book about racism I have ever read. I'm the type of person who likes to know why a villain is the way they are in films and books and out of all the books I have read about racism, this is the only one that specifically explains in great detail, and with sources, why racially-prejudiced Anglo-Saxons feel the way they do. I could not put this book down. It was highly educational from start-to-finish and I was sad when it ended. I learned so much. I believe this book's memorandum is clear - Human beings who do the things they do - rather good or bad - is done because of who they are. i.e. Where they were raised, how they were raised, and how their psychological makeup is. The skin color has nothing to do with it. We are all the same inside. "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." - Martin Luther King Jr.

It is important that we remember how commonplace even the most virulent displays of racism in the recent past, or we risk falling back into them. This book is informative, well-written and eye-opening, although it can be disturbing as well.

A must read for anyone living in a so-call post racial society. Know your history

Totally Satisfied

This book should be required reading!!!

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