

LESSON 2: PROMISES DENIED  
DOCUMENT SET 3: JIM CROW LAWS



*Library of Congress: LC-USF3301-012327-M5  
Farm Security Administration - Office of War Information Photograph Collection  
Photograph by Russell Lee. Oklahoma City, July 1939*

Questions to think about:

1. Why do you think laws such as the Jim Crow laws from Ohio and Arkansas were passed?
2. How do you think state legislatures justified these actions?
3. Do you think the cartoonist supported laws which required African Americans to ride in separate railway cars? Why or why not?
4. From the photograph, what can you tell about how long laws and racist attitudes were in place?

## LESSON 2: PROMISES DENIED

### DOCUMENT SET 4: MEXICAN AND MEXICAN AMERICAN LABOR

#### California Anti-Vagrancy Act of 1855

An Act to punish Vagrants, Vagabonds, and Dangerous and Suspicious Persons  
[Approved April 30, 1855]

*The People of the State of California, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:*

Section 1: All persons...who have no visible means of living, who in ten days do not seek employment, nor labor when employment is offered to them...all persons who roam about from place to place without any lawful business...all common prostitutes and common drunkards may be committed to jail and sentenced to hard labor for such time as the Court, before whom they are convicted shall think proper, not exceeding ninety days.

Section 2: All persons who are commonly known as “Greasers” or the issue of Spanish and Indian blood, who may come within the provisions of the first section of this Act, and who go armed and are not known to be peaceable and quiet persons, and who can give no good account of themselves, may be disarmed by any lawful officer, and punished otherwise as provided in the foregoing section...

Section 5: When the Board of Supervisors of the county shall be of opinion that any person, who may have been committed under the provisions of this Act, has so conducted himself or herself, whilst so confined or employed, that he or she should be no longer held, said Board of Supervisors may discharge such person from confinement, upon his paying what may remain due of the costs of prosecution and commitment, including his support whilst so confined...

## LESSON 2: PROMISES DENIED

### DOCUMENT SET 4: MEXICAN AND MEXICAN AMERICAN LABOR

California Alien Labor Act, 1931

*The people of the State of California do enact as follows:*

Section 1: No person, firm, partnership, association or corporation, or agent thereof, doing any work as a contractor or subcontractor upon any public work being done for or under the authority of the state...or for or under the authority of any county, city and county, city, town, township, district, or any other political subdivision thereof...shall knowingly employ or cause or allow to be employed thereon any alien, except in cases of extraordinary emergency caused by fire, flood, or danger to life or property, or except to work upon public military or naval defenses or works in time of war....Such contractor and each subcontractor shall also keep, or cause to be kept, an accurate record showing the names and citizenship of all workers employed by him...

Section 3: Work done for irrigation, utility, reclamation, improvement and other districts...as well as street, sewer and other improvement work done under the direction and supervision or by the authority of any officer or public body of the state...whether or not done under public supervision or direction, or paid for wholly or in part out of public funds, shall be held to be “public work” within the meaning of this act.

The term “alien” as used herein means any person who is not a born or fully naturalized citizen of the United States.

---

Interview with a Mexican American veteran, Los Angeles, California  
Printed in *La Opinión*, February 8, 1931

During the last three months, I have been getting up very early; I dress up and go downtown or uptown to the construction sites where the supervisors know me and always have given me a job. Soon the supervisors come out and tell the people that are waiting to get a job to line up on one side, all the white people, and on the other side the ones that are not. Because I am of dark complexion I stay with the people of my race and of course, do not get hired because the supervisor has the order to hire only the “white people” and that is what he does.