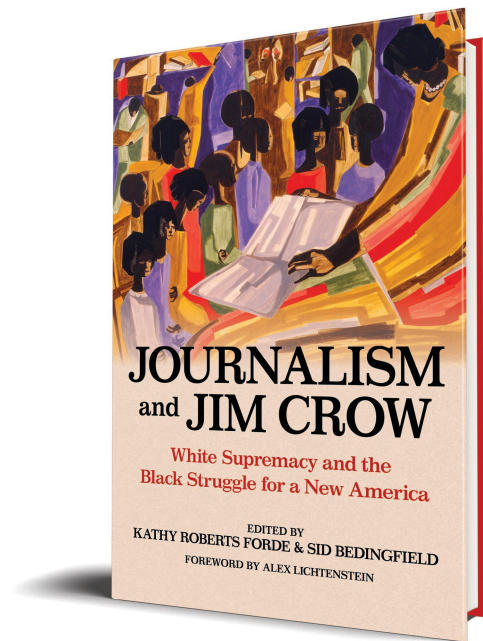


# Discussion Guide

For classrooms



**J**ournalism and Jim Crow presents a history many will find surprising, if not shocking. For generations after Reconstruction, powerful white newspaper publishers and editors, working collaboratively with white political and business leaders, designed, built, and defended white supremacist political economies and social orders in the U.S. South. They used the soft power of news narratives to spread anti-Black ideas and disinformation and to normalize tools of racial terror like lynching, mob violence, and convict leasing. They used hard institutional power to help enact laws and policies that entrenched segregation, protected white perpetrators of anti-Black violence, exploited Black labor, disenfranchised Black voters, corrupted the justice system, and quashed Black economic and social opportunity.

We like to think of the press as the fourth estate, an unofficial part of the U.S. political system that holds state power in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches accountable. We say it's the job of the press to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. The popular narrative of U.S. history embraces these heroic myths about the news media. But this understanding obscures the work of certain powerful white news leaders and their news institutions in supporting anti-democratic, white supremacist values and actions in moments of intense political conflict and change, both past and present.

As the white press helped build a new racial caste system in the South in the generations after Reconstruction, the Black press documented what was happening as it happened—and protested and resisted along the way. Black news leaders like Ida B. Wells, T. Thomas Fortune, W. E. B. Du Bois, J. Max Barber, Alexander Manly, and many more—activists all—called out white news, political, and business leaders for their anti-Black, anti-democratic actions. They used their news and civic institutions to organize the Black community and push for democratic reform. And they imagined and worked to build a “new America”

where Black Americans enjoyed full citizenship rights and equal opportunity in an inclusive, just, truly democratic society.

Today, Black journalists are urging majority white newsrooms to diversify their leadership, labor force, and content; to cover issues and events of vital significance to Black Americans with greater fairness and accuracy; and to reform longstanding journalistic commitments to professional values like neutrality and objectivity, which have too often been used as a cover for white supremacy, in favor of commitments to inclusion, racial justice, and democracy.

We hope high school and college teachers and students will use this discussion guide to explore the important history we share in *Journalism and Jim Crow* and discuss how this history can help us understand problems we grapple with today.

*Note to instructors:* Consider using these discussion questions and prompts in class discussions of assigned chapters; on digital discussion boards and forums; in pair-and-share activities during class; and as guides for short reading reflections at the beginning of class.

## Foreword

Alex Lichtenstein, editor of *American Historical Review* and author of the seminal book on convict leasing *Twice the Work of Free Labor*, writes that *Journalism and Jim Crow*'s "critique of the fourth estate's complicity in white supremacy surely speaks to our own time." Can you identify and explain any events and issues of the present that involve the news media's "complicity in white supremacy"?

Some events you might consider:

- the Capitol Insurrection of January 6, 2021;
- disinformation campaigns about voter fraud and state legislation meant to restrict voting rights;
- distortions and misrepresentations of Black Lives Matter protests and Black American life; and
- attacks on "critical race theory" and *The 1619 Project* and efforts to keep the history of anti-Black racism in America from being taught in K-12 classrooms.

# Introduction: Journalism and the World It Built

1. What role did journalism play in constructing U.S. democracy anew after Reconstruction in the American South? In discussing this issue, consider the roles of white urban dailies in the South and the Black press.
2. Sid Bedingfield and Kathy Roberts Forde write, “The unpleasant truth is that journalism in America has often not been devoted to democratic values.” Based on your reading of the Introduction and your own understanding of U.S. history, in what ways has U.S. journalism *not* served democratic values?
3. The authors argue that news media play significant roles in U.S. politics. Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. What was “the New South,” and how is that historical term and ideology important to understand when reading *Journalism and Jim Crow*?
5. In what ways does *Journalism and Jim Crow* revise previous historical understandings of journalism in the United States? Of Jim Crow and white supremacy? Of the criminal justice system? Of political conflict and change?
6. At the end of the Introduction, the authors ask, “How does the history of *Journalism and Jim Crow* shape our present and with what consequences—and possibilities—for journalism, democracy, and racial justice? Where can we go from here?” How would you answer these questions?

## Part One: The Contested New South

### Chapter 1: Architect of the New South

1. Henry W. Grady was managing editor of the *Atlanta Constitution* during the critical decade of the 1880s when white Southerners were constructing a new racial social order after Reconstruction came to an end. What other roles did Grady play in public life, both in Georgia and the nation, during the 1880s?

2. What is the popular historical narrative about Henry W. Grady's life and work, and in what specific ways does Kathy Roberts Forde offer a significantly different story? As you consider these conflicting understandings of Grady's contributions to U.S. history, why and how do you think they came about? Can they be reconciled?
3. In what ways did Grady embroil himself and the *Atlanta Constitution* in Georgia's convict leasing system and with what outcomes for his Atlanta Ring and for Black Georgians? Do you see any similarities between the Georgia Grady helped create and contemporary social conditions that gave rise to the modern-day lynching of Ahmaud Arbery?
4. Do you agree with Forde that Henry W. Grady was a chief architect not only of the New South but also of white supremacy in the New South? Why or why not?
5. Who is Rayford Logan, the historian Forde mentions in the chapter's conclusion, and what did he mean when he titled his review of a 1943 biography of Grady, in French, "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

## Chapter 2: Fight for a New America

1. D'Weston Haywood lays out Henry W. Grady's vision of the New South and what it offered the entire country. What was this vision?
2. While much of white America celebrated Grady's New South speeches and doctrine, the Black Press broadly condemned them and Grady's work as managing editor of the *Atlanta Constitution*. In what ways did Black journalists understand Grady as well as his "New South" ideology?
3. Haywood argues that the Black press helped create a Black counterpublic and a Black public sphere and discursive space in American life. Explain what he means and the work the Black press did on behalf of Black America and America as a whole.
4. Who was T. Thomas Fortune, and how did he oppose Grady? Who was Ida B. Wells, and how did she oppose the New South and white supremacy?

5. How was lynching a form of racial terror that constituted the New South, and how did the white Southern press encourage it? How did the Black press condemn it and work to end it?
6. The Black community and the Black press were not monolithic, and Black leaders often had conflicting visions of the way forward in a United States where anti-Black racism was everywhere. In what ways did Booker T. Washington's vision accept certain tenets of Grady's New South ideology and framework for life in the South and America at large?
7. Why were so many militant Black journalists, like W. E. B. Du Bois and T. Thomas Fortune, also leaders of Black civil rights organizations? Provide specific historical details as you discuss this question.
8. In the conclusion to this chapter, Haywood writes, "Against the promotional work buttressing the false logics of the New South, Black journalists promoted a far different vision, using Black newspapers to elevate a truth that exposed the South and country for what they actually were." What was the vision the Black press promoted? What was the truth about the South and the country the Black press exposed?

## Part Two: Racial Terror and Disenfranchisement

### Chapter 3: The Press and Lynching

1. Fitzhugh Brundage, a leading historian of lynching and the U.S. South, tells us that "any understanding of the phenomenon of lynching in the United States must begin with news accounts of lynchings." Why is this so?
2. In what ways did the white Southern press and the Black press treat lynching differently?
3. Why and how did the newsworthiness of lynching change as the nineteenth century ended and the twentieth century began—and with what consequences for journalism and the media cycle for lynching stories?
4. How did the *Atlanta Constitution's* role in the lynching of Tom Wilkes (aka Sam Hose) demonstrate the media cycle? What were the narrative tropes used in

this coverage? What do you make of the role of the *Atlanta Constitution* in this notorious lynching?

5. How did Black leaders and journalists set out to expose the lies about Tom Wilkes/Sam Hose spread by the *Atlanta Constitution* and other white newspapers?
6. How did white Southern newspapers tend to describe those who carried out racial terror lynchings and why?
7. How and why did the conventions of melodrama shape white news accounts of lynching?
8. How did Ida B. Wells, John Mitchell, and Alexander Manly use their positions in the Black press to agitate against lynching?

## Chapter 4: Mississippi Plan

1. Robert Greene II explains the first Mississippi Plan of 1875 and the second Mississippi Plan of 1890. What were these plans? What did they have in common, and how were they different? How role did white and Black press leaders play in each?
2. Who was Ethelbert Barksdale, and how and why did he use his powerful white newspaper the *Jackson Clarion* to orchestrate mass violence against Black citizens of Mississippi in 1875? What were the outcomes of his plan and work? Pay close attention to political parties and political power.
3. How did Black newspaper and magazine editors and journalists in Mississippi and throughout the nation react to the Mississippi Plan? What about Black historians and their books?
4. Who was T. Thomas Fortune and how did he use his stature as a Black newspaper editor, intellectual, and activist to protest the 1883 U.S. Supreme Court decision in the so-called *Civil Rights Cases*? What was at stake in this ruling? Why does it make sense to discuss Fortune's work in the context of a chapter titled "Mississippi Plan"?
5. How did Calvin W. Chase, editor of the Black newspaper the *Washington Bee*, advocate for the passage of the federal Lodge Bill? Why was the Lodge Bill of

such great interest in Mississippi, and how did opposition to it lead to the Second Mississippi Plan?

## Part Three: Building the Solid South

### Chapter 5: Populist Insurgency, Alabama

1. Who were the “Big Mules” in Alabama politics, and what was their relationship to the Democratic Party establishment and to the major Democratic Party newspapers in the state?
2. Sid Bedingfield says the state’s largest newspaper, the *Montgomery Daily Advertiser*, “earned its subsidy” from Louisville & Nashville Railroad during the 1890s when a rising populist insurgency challenged the Democratic Party establishment. Identify some specific ways the *Advertiser* fought the populist political movement.
3. What was the “reform press” and what role did it play in Alabama’s contentious political campaigns of the 1890s? How did *Montgomery Daily Advertiser* William Wallace Screws respond to criticism from the reform press?
4. Identify key members of the Black press and discuss their role in the Alabama politics in the 1890s.
5. What role did convict leasing play in Alabama’s economic and political life in the 1880s and 1890s? Where did the populist insurgency stand on this critical issue? How did Democratic Gov. Thomas Goode Jones and the *Advertiser*’s William Wallace Screws respond to the growing public opposition to convict leasing?
6. Historian C. Vann Woodward says the white populist movement that emerged across the South in the 1890s reached out to Black voters directly and tried to “integrate them thoroughly within the party, and give them feel a sense of belonging....” Based on Woodward’s description, would you describe Alabama’s Reuben Kolb as a populist? Why or why not?
7. Bedingfield says that newspapers in Alabama in the 1890s resembled the partisan press of early American republic more than the commercial “new

journalism” that was emerging in the urban North at the time. What evidence does his use to support this claim?

## Chapter 6: Tillman’s Rebellion, South Carolina

1. Who was Benjamin Ryan Tillman, according to Sid Bedingfield, and how did his particular vision of white supremacy shape South Carolina politics in the 1890s?
2. Tillman’s biographer, Stephen Kantrowitz, says Tillman’s political success was an example of “political elites manipulating images” to stoke resentments and demonize the perceived enemies of poor white farmers in the South. Identify some of the ways Tillman carried out this campaign.
3. Who was Austin John Reeks, and how did this Englishman emerge as the most influential newspaper editor in South Carolina across the 1880s?
4. The state’s leading conservative newspapers, the *Charleston News and Courier* and *The State*, often criticized Tillman and opposed his rise to power. But why does Sid Bedingfield claim those newspapers also played a critical role in ensuring Tillman’s political success?
5. Bedingfield says the conservative dailies in Charleston and Columbia supported white supremacy, but “they preferred a more genteel and paternalistic version of white rule, one that placed as much emphasis on class as race.” Identify some of the evidence he uses to support that view?
6. Newspapers played a significant role in the Democratic Party’s effort to overthrow the biracial Reconstruction government and “redeem” South Carolina for white supremacy. Identify one detailed example of how journalists contributed to this effort.
7. Ben Tillman claimed he was a radical reformer who was fighting on behalf of poor farmers. Was he a populist? How did Tillman view the populist movement that was challenging Democratic Party establishments across the South in the 1890s?
8. When Tillman moved to eliminate Black suffrage in South Carolina, a group of Black leaders sought to mobilize northern public opinion against the effort. Six



Black leaders, including former U.S. Congressmen Roberts Smalls and Thomas E. Miller, wrote to a leading northern newspaper, the *New York World*, seeking support. How did the newspaper respond?

## Chapter 7: Death of Democracy, North Carolina

1. Describe the role of Josephus Daniels and his newspaper the *Raleigh News & Observer* in the election of 1898 in North Carolina. According to Kristin Gustafson, how did Daniels use the newspaper to help the Democratic Party in its efforts to regain control of the state legislature? Be sure to explain the use of anti-Black political cartoons and racist tropes and stereotypes.
2. Describe the Fusionist Movement and explain why Democratic Party leaders were so eager to destroy it.
3. Who was Alexander Manly and how did he use his Wilmington newspaper to resist the Democrats' white supremacist political campaign strategy that dehumanized Black men? What ultimately happened to him and his newspaper?
4. Why did an organized white militia known as the Red Shirts attack the Black community of Wilmington just days after the state election, and what did they do?
5. What were the short-term and long-term outcomes of the Democratic Party's successful efforts in North Carolina in 1898?
6. In your opinion, should the history of the North Carolina Election of 1898 and the Wilmington Massacre be taught in North Carolina public schools? In college journalism history courses? Does the *Raleigh News & Observer* owe Black descendants of the Wilmington Massacre and electoral violence in 1898 more than an apology? Perhaps some type of reparations?
7. Kristin Gustafson and Kathy Roberts Forde published an article comparing the 2021 Capitol Insurrection with the 1898 North Carolina election and Wilmington Massacre. Do you agree or disagree with their argument? Why or why not?

## Chapter 8: Convict Wars, Tennessee

1. Razvan Sibii describes what happened in Briceville, Tennessee, in 1891. What happened, and how was Arthur S. Colyar involved in these events? Be sure to describe the conflict between free labor and convict labor and the nature of the “convict wars.”
2. How did Colyar use white newspapers in Tennessee to serve his political and business interests in convict leasing? Be sure to explain what convict leasing was and how it worked.
3. Describe Colyar’s affiliation with the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, how this company benefitted from the use of convict labor, and its relationship with Pratt Coal and Iron Company in Alabama.
4. What was the purpose of the 1869 Coal Convention in Atlanta? How might the system of convict leasing have benefitted both the railroad and coal industries?
5. Describe the contents and nature of the debate in editorial letters Arthur S. Colyar and J.C. Haselton published in the *Republican Banner* in 1872 and 1873.
6. How did Colyar use his ownership of the *Nashville American* and then the *Nashville Union*, with backing from railroads, to promote his business interests and the practice of convict leasing?
7. How did Colyar bequeath a legacy that has shaped today’s racially disparate mass incarceration system? What was the role of the press in these matters, then and now?

## Chapter 9: Tourist Empires, Florida

1. Who was Henry M. Flagler, according to Kathy Roberts Forde and Bryan Bowman, and how did he help develop Florida? Who was Henry B. Plant, and how did he help develop Florida?
2. What were the exploitative labor practices Flagler and Plant used to build their tourist empires on separate coasts of Florida, and how did these labor

systems—convict leasing and debt peonage—operate? In what ways were these systems distinct, and in what ways did they overlap? How did they target Black men, women, and children? How did they target young immigrant men?

3. Explain why Flagler bought controlling interests in newspapers in towns he helped develop and how he used these newspapers to his advantage.
4. In what ways did Flagler's businesses in Florida follow Henry W. Grady's ideology of the New South?
5. Describe what we know of Henry B. Plant's use of convict labor to build his railroads from J.C. Powell's memoir *American Siberia*? What is a reasonable explanation for why this book received almost no press coverage in Florida and the South but plenty of coverage in other parts of the country?
6. Describe the U.S. Justice Department's peonage case against Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway. How did the Northern press cover Flagler's abuse of immigrant labor in building his Overseas Railroad from Miami to and across the Florida Keys? How did Flagler use his control of the Florida press to his advantage? What are some historical outcomes of Flagler's control of the press in this situation?

## Part Four: Measuring the Cost

### Chapter 10: Silencing a Generation

1. Blair LM Kelley begins this chapter by describing the world of Black journalism in the South at the turn of the century. Describe what you have learned about this world with reference to the stories of Ida B. Wells, Alexander Manley, and Reverend A.C. McEwen.
2. What do you know about Jesse Max Barber's career in journalism, and how did he use *Voice of the Negro* to agitate for Black rights and freedom?
3. What made Atlanta such a promising city in which to found *Voice of the Negro*?

4. How did Booker T. Washington attempt to influence the content of Barber's journal and with what consequences?
5. How did the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 shape Black life in Atlanta, and how did Barber use his journal to fight back, particularly in regard to streetcar boycotts?
6. What role did the *Atlanta Constitution* and the *Atlanta Journal* play in instigating the so-called "Atlanta Race Riot" in 1906? Be sure to account for the gubernatorial race, racist tropes about Black men, and white displeasure about Black presence in the city.
7. How did Jesse Max Barber respond to false white journalistic accounts blaming the white supremacist mob violence on Black men assaulting white women? How did the white elite of Atlanta respond? What happened to Barber?
8. Kelley writes in her conclusion, "These [Black] journalists suffered the loss of capital in the value of their presses, yes, but there was a greater cost, both personal and historical: the cost of silencing a generation of the most radical activist journalists and stifling the dissent of those who remained." What do you think were the personal and historical costs Kelley wants us to consider?

## Epilogue: Journalism and the World to Come

1. In the epilogue, Kathy Roberts Forde and Sid Bedingfield say leading white newspapers "enjoyed the spoils of victory" after the Democratic Party overthrew Reconstruction and built an illiberal, Jim Crow South. What did they mean by this?
2. How did so many of the large white urban dailies chronicled in *Journalism and Jim Crow* continue to support an illiberal vision of the United States well into the twentieth century—and with what consequences? How did the Black press forward a more liberal vision of the United States?
3. How did the national white news media support the Civil Rights Movement, according to Charles M. Payne, and how did they miss important parts of the story? How did they distort the Black Power Movement that followed?

4. What was the Kerner Commission report, and what did it have to say about mainstream journalism and its coverage of the Black community across the United States? How did mainstream journalistic outlets address the concerns raised by the Kerner Commission? Did they answer those concerns successfully?
5. What was the ASNE's Project 2020 campaign, and why did it fail?
6. Forde and Bedingfield say journalists have learned "a great deal about the limits of democratic norms" during the Trump presidency — and "they learned the limits of journalistic norms, too." What are some examples they provide to support this claim?
7. How did Black journalists challenge majority white newsrooms during the summer of 2020 when Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality spread across the United States and the world after Minneapolis police killed George Floyd? Forde and Bedingfield reference a widely read essay by Black journalist Wesley Lowrey. How does Lowrey believe editorial decisions are made in most mainstream newsrooms? What steps can be taken to address this concern.
8. What do you think about newspapers apologizing for past racist actions and coverage? Do you think journalism needs to reform any of its professional practices or values in light of the history you've learned in *Journalism and Jim Crow*?