**Response to Jim Crow – Letter to the Editor Instructions**

**Directions**: Assume the role of an African-American citizen in the early 1900’s. Take your own position on the central question of this unit: **What is the most effective method of responding to Jim Crow laws?** Your writing should take the form of a letter to the editor to be published in the African-American newspapers throughout the country, such as the *Chicago Defender,* the *Birmingham World,* or the *New York Age.*

**Requirements**:

1. Your letter must include a minimum of 5 paragraphs as described below.
2. Your letter should use persuasive language and should be written to the African-American people.
3. Your letter should be written in the 1st person, – “I”.

**Editorial Format**:

Paragraph 1:

Describe the problem: Describe the economic and legal conditions facing African-Americans in the early 1900’s. Include a minimum of five factual events, cases, laws, or practices common in this period.

Paragraph 2:

Choose one of the strongest visions presented for responding to Jim Crow and give two reasons you feel this vision will be most likely to improve society for African-Americans.

Paragraph 3:

Choose a second of the strongest visions presented for responding to Jim Crow and give two reasons you feel this vision will be most likely to improve society for African-Americans.

Paragraph 4:

Choose a third vision you disagree with strongly and give two reasons you feel this vision would make conditions for African-Americans worse.

Paragraph 5:

Provide your vision. You may choose one of the visions presented or you can create your

own combination of ideas. Provide three reasons you feel your vision is the most likely

to improve the conditions for African-Americans.

**Assessment Rubric for Letter to the Editor**

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| **Assessment Criteria** | **Rating** |
| 1. Editorial Format: *includes 5 paragraphs; uses persuasive language; written in first person; uses good grammar and spelling* |  |
| 1. In paragraph one student accurately and thoroughly describes the historical legal and economic conditions of African-Americans. |  |
| 1. In paragraph two student supports a strong vision with accurate historical evidence. |  |
| 1. In paragraph three student supports a strong vision with accurate historical evidence. |  |
| 1. In paragraph four student describes a weak vision with accurate historical evidence. |  |
| 1. In paragraph five student synthesizes a clear vision with accurate historical evidence. |  |
| Overall Assessment | Total = \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |

**Description of Criteria Ratings:**5 = Exemplary: *Goes beyond expectations to create original, highly insightful work.*4 = Competent: *Meets expectations. Work is accurate and thorough.*3 = Acceptable: *Meets most expectations with only minor omissions or inaccuracies.*  
2 = Needs Significant Improvement: *Work has major omissions, inaccuracies.*  
1 = Unsatisfactory: *Fails to meet minimal standards for quality work.*

**Model Letter to the Editor**

**Responding to British Tyranny**

Dear Editor,

As citizens of the British Empire in her thirteen colonies in North America, we face oppression by the British. They have denied us representation in Parliament, which violates the Magna Carta and other legal documents foundational to British legal and governmental principles. We in the thirteen colonies are not opposed to paying taxes, but we are opposed to having no say in what those taxes will be or how they will be spent. We are also opposed to the economic laws restricting our businesses to trade with other countries other than England. This is fundamentally unfair and harms our businesses. It would be better for the British Empire if we were allowed to trade with other nations because our businesses would be more prosperous, thus allowing the British government to collect higher rates of taxation from us.

The strongest idea for persuading the British to consider our requests for representation in parliament is to boycott all British goods. We should spin our own cloth and not buy clothing or woven goods produced in Great Britain. We should buy only American grown coffee and stop drinking British tea. If we boycott their goods, they will realize how valuable we are as participants in the British Empire’s economy and bow to the pressure to give us representation in Parliament. We can show our influence on the Empire in a way that hits them where they feel it most – their wallets.

The Sons of Liberty have taken bold actions such as tarring and feathering British customs agents and dumping British tea into Boston Harbor. The Sons feel their actions push our perspective and show the British we are urgent and serious in our demands. Their actions are appealing to those citizens frustrated with the lack of progress more peaceful means have produced. However, I do not feel these actions are as strong as the strict boycott for several reasons. First, they show we are not law-abiding British citizens. They make us appear to be barbarians who use violence and fear to intimidate people into listening to us. Second, if the British see us as violent, they will be more likely to fight us even harder and not listen to our reasonable requests for representation.

The weakest vision is from colonists ready to take up arms and fight the British Empire by declaration our independence immediately. This is a fools’s errand as we do not even have an army. We would be fighting the most powerful army in the world. Also, citizens of the British Empire currently enjoy more freedoms than any other nations on earth so why would we want to go to war against such a powerful enemy when we are better off than most people around the world. We would be crushed in our effort and lose all bargaining ability to gain representation in parliament. Our request is really quite mild, but taking military actions would make us appear foolish, if not insane.

In conclusion, the strongest vision is a strict and colony-wide boycott of all British manufactured goods: paper, glass, tea, cloth, silver, etc. We must stop buying anything from British manufacturers until they see our importance and prominent place in the British Empire. When they recognize this they will grant us our modest request of a few seats in Parliament in order to influence the debate on how taxes are raised and spent here in the North American colonies.

Sincerely,

Joe Smith