

Name: _____

Black Code Laws Primary Source

After the slaves were freed, Southern communities passed laws called "black codes" to control black citizens. These laws varied from community to community, but their effect was similar. The following excerpts were from St. Landry Parish's black codes. A "parish" in the deep South is similar to a county. St. Landry Parish is located in Louisiana. Read the primary source and complete the following questions in complete sentences.

Sec. 3. . . . No negro shall be permitted to rent out a house within said parish. Any negro violating this provision shall be immediately ejected and compelled to find an employer. . . .

Sec. 4. . . . Every negro is required to be in the regular service of some white person, or former owner, who shall be held responsible for the conduct of said negro. But said employer or former owner may permit said negro to pay for his own free time by special permission in writing, which permission shall not extend over seven days at any one time.

Sec. 5. . . . No public meetings or congregations of negroes shall be allowed within said parish after sunset; but such public meetings and congregations may be held between the hours of sunrise and sunset. . . .

Sec. 6. . . . No negro shall be permitted to preach, exhort, or otherwise declaim to congregations of colored people, without a special permission in writing from the president of the police jury. . . .

Sec. 7. . . . No negro who is not in the military service shall be allowed to carry fire-arms, or any kind of weapons, within the parish, without the special written permission of his employers, approved and endorsed by the nearest and most convenient chief of patrol. . . .

Sec. 8. . . . No negro shall sell, barter, or exchange any articles of merchandise or traffic within said parish without the special written permission of his employer. . . .

Sec. 9. . . . Any negro found drunk, within the said parish shall pay a fine of five dollars, or in default thereof work five days on the public road, or suffer corporeal punishment as hereinafter provided.

Sec. 11. . . . It shall be the duty of every citizen to act as a police officer for the detection of offences and the apprehension of offenders, who shall be immediately handed over to the proper captain or chief of patrol. . . .

1. Which of the rules offends you the most? Explain your answer. (2)

2. How might these laws be enforced in a local community or parish? What role did citizens play in enforcing the codes? (2)

3. Speculate on what might be some of the consequences if black people broke these laws. (2)

4. One motive for passing these codes was to keep black people from rising up and rioting against white citizens, perhaps in retribution for years of slavery in the South. Name two laws that were designed to prevent such an insurrection from happening. (2)

5. Another motive for these codes was to prevent black people from advancing financially. Name two laws that were designed to prevent black people from becoming entrepreneurs and seeking individual financial gain. (2)
