

Separate Was Never Equal

By Erica M. Hayden

A white man who was one of the first performers to use blackface did so by using burnt cork. This man was a walking representation of segregation and laws and encouraged anti-black racism. This man's name is Thomas Rice, but many, myself included; knew him as Jim Crow. For years, racism and discrimination have been a universal issue in the United States more than ever.

The Jim Crow laws had begun around 1865, they were harsh state or local laws that ensured the odds were stacked against African Americans. The laws restricted many things as big as marriage to something as small as using a telephone booth. For example, Ferris State University discovered many laws and restrictions in a few states. Oklahoma, for instance.

“Teaching: Any instructor who shall teach in any school, college or institution where members of the white and colored race are received and enrolled as pupils for instruction shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon conviction thereof, shall be fined in any sum not less than ten dollars (\$10.00) nor more than fifty dollars (\$50.00) for each offense.” Said FSU.

Earlier this year, Mississippi essentially passed a bill that opened a door to reviving the Jim Crow Laws. Mississippi has roughly 2.9 million residents, African Americans make up 37.8% of their population. Mississippi's House of Representatives dominantly consists of Republicans, which would explain the bill they have chosen to pass onto the state and its civilians. The bill essentially gives the conservative chief justice of the Mississippi Supreme Court power to handpick the district's two new supervising justices. As well as the attorney general being able to select the public defenders and prosecutors. An opinion piece written by Kali Holloway on *Daily Beast* better explains the situation.

“Black House Democrats rightly compared the bill to Mississippi’s 1890 Constitution, which was drafted explicitly to “exclude the Negro” from voting through sinister methods of Black disenfranchisement.” Said, Holloway.

The new bill being passed is leading others to fear for their safety, community, rights, freedom, family, and themselves; myself included. Growing up with my mother was something not many people would understand. I was raised in a Mexican household, so my father wasn’t around to tell me how the world may view me as a threat, a menace, or something less than human. It wasn’t until I got older that I realized that my mother’s side of the family viewed me as nothing more than that: a threat.

Being a mixed person of color, I found out later in life that there was an invisible target on my back since I was born. Yet, many have witnessed or endured the full extent of that target, like George Floyd, Michael Brown, Tyre Nichols, Tracey Gaeta, Keenan Anderson, Ki’Azia Miller, and many more. It is devastating as it is to see so many innocent lives lost, whether it be from police brutality or others taking matters into their own hands due to their twisted opinions and beliefs. Not only do we have to be wary of how we are dressed, how we act, and how to control or show our emotions due to the color of our skin. Now, we must be wary of our government- Mississippi opening the doors to reintroduce Jim Crow Laws could lead to even more bloodshed than the amount of blood spilled by police officers, the same people who’re meant to protect us.

“In addition to 2022 being the year where police killed 1,176—the highest we’ve seen in a decade—the research revealed that Black people made up 24% of those fatalities even though we make up 13% of the population.” Said Candace McDuffie from *The Root*.

Citations

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