

FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia

Jim Crow Era



Thomas Dartmouth Rice, a struggling white actor, became famous by performing in blackface makeup as "Jim Crow," an exaggerated, highly stereotypical black character. By 1838, the term "Jim Crow" was being used as a collective racial epithet for blacks, not as offensive as *nigger*, but as offensive as *coon*

or *darkie*. The popularity of minstrel shows aided the spread of Jim Crow as a racial slur. By the end of the 19th century, Jim Crow was being used to describe laws and customs that oppressed blacks.

1870

A Virginia law made it illegal for black and white children to attend the same schools.

1875 March 1

Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875, which prohibited discrimination in public accommodations, including inns, theaters, public conveyances on land or water, and "other places of public amusement."

1877 March 2

Republican Rutherford B. Hayes was elected President by the Electoral College after a deal was worked out with leading southern Democrats. The withdrawal of all remaining federal troops from the South marked the effective end of Reconstruction.

1879

Thousands of southern blacks frustrated with discrimination and poverty in the South emigrated to the West. They met hostility from western whites and Native Americans. This is sometimes called the Exodus of 1879.



1882

In 1882, at least 49 blacks were lynched. According to Tuskegee Institute data, 3,438 blacks were lynched between the years 1882 and 1951.

1883 October 15

The United States Supreme Court ruled in Civil Rights Cases of 1883 that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional. The Court ruled that the 14th Amendment prohibited states, but not citizens, from discriminating. This civil rights reversal was devastating for African Americans.

1890-1908

Southern states adopted new constitutions and voting laws designed to disenfranchise black voters.

1892

Ida B. Wells began writing articles and campaigning against lynching. At least 161 blacks were lynched in 1892, probably the highest number in a single year.



1896 May 18

In Plessy v. Ferguson, the United States Supreme Court established the "Separate but Equal Doctrine," holding that legal racial segregation does not violate the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

1903

The Souls of Black Folk by W.E.B. Du Bois was published. According to Manning Marable, author of a biography of Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* "helped to create the intellectual argument for the black freedom struggle in the twentieth century."

1909 May 31- June 1

The National Negro Conference met in New York City and founded the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

1913-1921

Woodrow Wilson institutionalized segregation in the federal civil service. By the end of World War I, the District of Columbia was thoroughly segregated as well.

1914

Every southern state and many northern cities had Jim Crow laws that discriminated against black Americans.

1914

Marcus Garvey established the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica, which promoted black nationalism and pan-Africanism. Later in the decade, Garvey moved his headquarters to New York City and the UNIA became a large grassroots movement.

1915

The movie Birth of a Nation, based on Thomas Dixon's The Clansman, popularized many anti-black caricatures, especially the Brute. The movie also glorified the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and helped lead to its resurgence.



1915-1930

In the Great Migration, rural southern blacks moved to northern cities, to the West, and to southern cities.

Between 1915 and 1920, 500,000 to 1 million moved to the North; another

700,000 to 1 million moved to the North and West in the 1920s.

1917

The United States entered World War I. Approximately 370,000 blacks saw service during the conflict, including about 1,400 officers. Three black regiments received the Croix de Guerre for valor.

1917 July

At least forty blacks were attacked and killed during a race riot in East St. Louis, Illinois. Three weeks later, some 10,000 blacks participated in a silent march down Fifth Avenue in New York City to protest racial oppression, especially riots directed against black communities.

1919

Many whites, resentful of black demands for equality, attacked blacks. Chicago, Houston, Little Rock, Harlem, Washington D.C.,

New York, Baltimore, New Orleans, and many other cities had outbreaks of rioting as whites attacked blacks throughout the United States. This period is called the Red Summer.

1920 August 18

The 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution was ratified, giving women the right to vote.



1920-1935

The Harlem Renaissance was a major artistic awakening among African-Americans. Key figures included Claude McKay, Jean Toomer, Jacob Lawrence, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston.

1925

The Ku Klux Klan had 3 million members during its heyday in the early 1920s. Roughly half its members lived in metropolitan areas, and although it enjoyed considerable support in the South, the Klan was strongest in the Midwest and Southwest. On August 8, 1925, 35,000 members of the Klan marched down Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington, D.C.

1928 November

Oscar DePriest, a Chicago Republican, was the first African American elected to Congress from a district north of the Mason-Dixon Line.

1936 August 9

Jesse Owens became the first American to win four gold medals in one Olympics. His athletic success was a direct refutation of Adolph Hitler's ideology of Aryan supremacy.

1940-1960

The coming of World War II signaled the beginning of another wave of black migration from rural areas to urban areas, and from the South to the North and West. By 1960, 40% of African Americans lived in the North and West, and nearly three-quarters lived in cities.

1941

President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 8802, which eliminated hiring discrimination in the defense industry and established the Fair Employment Practices Commission. In response, black leaders, including A. Philip Randolph, canceled a planned march on Washington.

1942

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) was founded in Chicago.

1945

World War II ended. Approximately 1,150,000 blacks were inducted into the military, with most serving in support units.

1950

Gwendolyn Brooks won the Pulitzer Prize for Annie Allen, a volume of poetry. She was the first African American to win



the award.

1952

The Tuskegee Institute reported that 1952 was the first year with no reported lynchings since it began keeping records.

1953

Malcolm X became a minister in the Nation of Islam.

1955

The Maryland legislature passed a law that imprisoned any white woman who birthed a mixed-race child. The white woman would be incarcerated up to five years. The law was renewed in 1957.

1956

An Alabama law barred blacks and whites from playing cards, dominoes, checkers, pool, football, baseball, basketball, or golf together. A North Carolina law required factories and plants to maintain separate bathrooms for black employees. A Louisiana law mandated that movie theaters and all places of public entertainment separate white and black patrons.

1958

The Virginia legislature voted to close any school that enrolled both black and white students.

1959

An Arkansas law required all state buses to designate whites-only seating areas.



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