

The Jim Crow Laws

from Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site



ABOUT THE READING Beginning in the 1880s, Southern states legalized segregation between African Americans and whites with the Jim Crow laws. In 1896, the Supreme Court ruled that separate facilities for whites and blacks were constitutional. It was not until after World War II that the fight against Jim Crow began.

VOCABULARY

misdemeanor a crime that is not as serious as a felony

discretion freedom to decide

intermarriage marriage between different groups



As you read the laws below, think of why some call this the worst time in American history.

Buses All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races. *Alabama*

Education The schools for white children and the schools for negro children shall be conducted separately. *Florida*

Textbooks Books shall not be interchangeable between the white and colored schools, but shall continue to be used by the race first using them. *North Carolina*

Housing Any person . . . who shall rent any part of any such building to a negro person or a negro family when such building to a negro person or a negro family when such building already in whole or in part in occupancy by a white person or white family, or vice versa when the building is in occupancy by a negro person or negro family, shall be guilty of a **misdemeanor** and on conviction thereof shall be punished by a fine of not less than twenty-five (\$25.00) nor more than one hundred (\$100.00)

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 ended this type of discrimination.

Source: National Park Service/Department of the Interior, Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, http://www.nps.gov/malu/documents/jim_crow_laws.htm

dollars or be imprisoned not less than 10, or more than 60 days, or both such fine and imprisonment in the **discretion** of the court. *Louisiana*

Amateur Baseball It shall be unlawful for any amateur white baseball team to play baseball on any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of a playground devoted to the Negro race, and it shall be unlawful for any amateur colored baseball team to play baseball in any vacant lot or baseball diamond within two blocks of any playground devoted to the white race. *Georgia*

Promotion of Equality Any person . . . who shall be guilty of printing, publishing or circulating printed, typewritten or written matter urging or presenting for public acceptance or general information, arguments or suggestions in favor of social equality or of **inter-marriage** between whites and negroes, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to fine or not exceeding five hundred (500.00) dollars or imprisonment not exceeding six (6) months or both. *Mississippi*

Mining The baths and lockers for the negroes shall be separate from the white race, but may be in the same building. *Oklahoma*

Which amendment does this law in Mississippi violate?

ANALYZING LITERATURE

1. Main Idea What was the purpose of the Jim Crow laws?

2. Critical Thinking: Drawing Conclusions How has the elimination of the Jim Crow laws changed life in your town or city?

3. Activity If you were a political cartoonist working for a local newspaper in the South you might have poked fun at these laws. Draw a political cartoon satirizing the Jim Crow Laws. Use labels, symbols, and add a title to your cartoon.