

EXHIBIT 2



Movie theater in Leland, 1937 (Dorothea Lange, photographer, Library of Congress [LC-USF34- 017417-E], Washington, D.C.)

Segregation

4 minutes to read

Segregation touched every aspect of life in Mississippi. Racial discrimination was so prevalent after the demise of Reconstruction that some whites saw no need for Jim Crow legislation. African Americans and whites lived separate lives on almost every level. They were kept apart in private and public hospitals and were prevented from using the same entrances to state-funded health care facilities. Black criminals were not incarcerated in the same prison cells with whites, and the races could not even ride together in taxis.

After 1877 African Americans lost their political rights in Mississippi through intimidation, fraud, and outright murder, and racial segregation became largely a matter of custom. According to historian Neil McMillen, "Mississippi seems to have had fewer Jim Crow laws during the entire segregation period than most southern states." In other words, since African Americans knew their "place," whites did not need legislation to control black behavior. Wherever they turned, black Mississippians faced segregation. More often than not, Jim Crow customs required both separation and exclusion. The state legislature passed laws segregating trains in 1888 and streetcars in 1904. At weddings and funerals, in courtrooms, public facilities, and other places used for social gathering, habit kept the races apart. The code of racial etiquette prohibited any form of interracial activity that might have even remotely implied equality. Nonetheless, blacks were more concerned with having equal access to facilities than they were with integration per se.

In 1890 the Mississippi legislature called a constitutional convention expressly to disfranchise blacks. The Second Mississippi Plan emerged from this meeting, imposing literacy requirements, poll taxes, and laws denying the vote to anyone convicted of bribery, arson, murder, theft, or burglary—crimes for which African Americans were much more likely to be convicted than whites. Following Mississippi's lead, other southern states began to enact laws to deny blacks the franchise. The US Supreme Court's decision in *Williams v. Mississippi* (1898) added to African Americans' political impotence by denying them federal civil rights law protection.

The few blacks who participated in Mississippi's political system during the early Jim Crow years were members of the Republican Party. However, they were still segregated within the party, where their Black and Tan faction often clashed with its Lily-White counterpart. The educational situation was similarly bleak for blacks. Mississippi had the dubious distinction of being the southern state that spent the least on black education. Indeed, great disparities existed in the segregated education provided for black and white children. In 1900, although African American children accounted for 60 percent of the state's school-age population, they received only 19 percent of the state's school funds. Adams County spent \$22.23 to educate each white child, but only \$2.00 for each black child. And after 1890, biracial education was unconstitutional. However, most African American complaints centered on the inequality inherent in the system as opposed to segregation itself. Blacks deeply resented that their tax dollars were being used disproportionately to fund white education.

African Americans were denied access to private and public recreational facilities. They could not go to skating rinks, tennis courts, bowling alleys, or swimming pools. In fact, not until World War II did Mound Bayou physician Theodore R. M. Howard build the state's first swimming pool for blacks. Likewise, movie theaters often had separate ticket windows for blacks, who had to enter through side or rear doors. Although they paid the same amount as white patrons for their tickets, African Americans also had to sit in the balcony or other segregated portions of the facility.

One of the greatest taboos during the era of segregation was interracial dating and marriage, which was illegal. The state legislature also barred the publication or circulation of printed materials that favored intermarriage, imposing punishments of fines of up to five hundred dollars and jail terms of up to six months. Worse than the legal punishments were the extralegal ones: a black man accused of merely looking at or touching a white woman could suffer mob violence—flogging, lynching, drowning, burning, or being dragged to death behind an automobile.

One way African Americans responded to this repressive system of Jim Crow exclusion and segregation was by developing their own parallel institutions—churches, colleges and universities, Masonic lodges, fraternities and sororities, and professional associations such as the National Negro Business League, the Mississippi Negro Business League, the Negro Bankers Association of Mississippi, the National Association of Colored Women, the Mississippi State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the National Medical Association, the National Bar Association, the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses, and the National Hospital Association.

According to historian Darlene Clark Hine, "Without the parallel institutions that the black professional class created, successful challenges to white supremacy would not have been possible. The formation of parallel organizations . . . proved to be far more radical, far more capable of nurturing resistance, than anyone could have anticipated. . . . [S]egregation provided blacks the chance, indeed, the imperative, to develop a range of distinct institutions they controlled." Although blacks looked at segregation with contempt, they had no choice but to live within that system, and creating parallel institutions helped them to do so.

A crack in Mississippi's wall of segregation eventually occurred through its system of higher education. During Reconstruction, some black leaders demanded that African Americans be admitted into the University of Mississippi at Oxford. Whites, however, refused to consider such requests. Although this system of exclusion lasted for nearly a century, James Meredith filed a racial discrimination complaint against the University of Mississippi in 1961, and he enrolled at the university the following year, but only after Pres. John F. Kennedy sent three hundred federal marshals to uphold the Fifth Circuit Court's decision to admit him. Civil rights sit-ins and boycotts also challenged the institution of segregation, often with success. School desegregation took place slowly in the years after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, with the rise of all-white private schools negating some of the goals of desegregation. From the late 1800s through the 1960s, Mississippi developed an infamous record as what McMillen has labeled the "heartland of American apartheid."

Written by **David H. Jackson Jr., Florida A&M University**

Further Reading

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John Hope Franklin, *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans* (1994)

Darlene Clark Hine, *Journal of American History* (March 2003)

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David H. Jackson Jr., *A Chief Lieutenant of the Tuskegee Machine: Charles Banks of Mississippi* (2002)

Neil R. McMillen, *Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow* (1989)

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