

## JIM CROW LAWS IN MISSISSPPI

As a former member of the Confederacy, Mississippi was a state that supported racial segregation. Mississippi passed 23 “Jim Crow” laws between 1865 and 1958. Jim Crow laws were laws passed by state and local governments across the South to enforce segregation. Below, you will see some examples of Mississippi’s Jim Crow laws and the punishments that would be faced by anyone who broke them.

### **1865: Miscegenation (Statute)**

Declared a felony for any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto to intermarry with any white person. Penalty: Imprisonment in state penitentiary for life.

### **1865: Railroad (Statute)**

Unlawful for any freedman, free Negro, or mulatto to ride in any first-class passenger cars used by white persons. Penalty: Misdemeanor punished by a fine between \$50 to \$500; imprisonment in county jail until fine and costs of prosecution are paid. Half of the fines to be paid to the informer, the other half to the county treasury where offense was committed.

### **1867: Jury Selection (Statute)**

Negroes declared incompetent to serve as jurors.

### **1878: Education (Statute)**

Prohibited teaching white and black children in the same school.

### **1920: Miscegenation (Statute)**

Persons or corporations who printed, published or circulated written material promoting the acceptance of intermarriage between whites and Negroes would be guilty of a misdemeanor. Penalty: Fine up to \$500 or imprisonment up to six months, or both.

**1942: Voting Rights (Constitution):** Instituted poll tax requirement.

### **1956: Education (State Code & Constitution)**

Separate schools to be maintained. All state executive officers required to prevent implementation of school segregation decision by “lawful means.” Governor may close any school if he determines closure to be in best interests of majority of children.

### **1956: Public Accommodation (Statute)**

Firms and corporations authorized to choose their clientele and the right to refuse service to any person.

### **1958: Recreation (Statute)**

Authorized governor to close parks to prevent desegregation.

Source: Arthur and Emalie Gutterman Family Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education/Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters. (n.d.). Map of Jim Crow America (pp. 13-14). Florida Atlantic University.

<https://www.fau.edu/artsandletters/pjhr/chhre/pdf/sjc-map-jim-crow-america.pdf>

## LYNCHING IN AMERICA

*Known as “frontier justice,” lynching was initially an extreme punishment – tarring-and-feathering, beating, and flogging. In the 1830’s, however, lynching came to mean hanging. It was the public execution of a person for a crime that he or she was accused of. Southern lynching featured violent public hangings performed by white people specifically to terrorize Blacks during the 19th and 20th centuries. Lynching enabled white supremacy and suppressed Black civil rights. By 1900, the definition of lynching had evolved to mean exclusively the “summary execution of Southern Black men.”*

From 1882 to 1968, nearly 5,000 people of color were lynched in the South, and more than 340 were lynched north of the Mason-Dixon line. Although Black people were the primary victims, some white people who helped Blacks or who had been charged with crimes were also lynched. Black or white, these individuals were terrorized by a barbaric penalty for offenses they had not committed.

Although lynching was believed to be punishment for rape or interracial sex, in fact, only about one-fourth of the lynchings were prompted by the accusation of rape. Most victims of lynching were political activists, labor organizers, or men and women who had violated white expectations of what was acceptable for Blacks to say or do. Making a mistake like paying a compliment to or making eye contact with a white woman could cost a Black man his life. Any Black person considered “uppity” was at risk. And lynching was not limited to men alone. Lynching Blacks was an extreme form of punishment that existed outside the court system. It was a tactic used to maintain control by victimizing and dominating entire Black communities through fear.

Fear of loss of power and racial prejudice promoted an increase in lynching after Reconstruction. Although some lynchings occurred during slavery, after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, the threat of Blacks registering to vote, starting their own businesses, and running for office was more than many Southern whites could bear. Because whites felt threatened by an apparent rise in Black prominence, lynching was used to enforce Jim Crow laws and maintain segregation. Rather than risk lynching, Black families sent young men away to the North and the West under cover of darkness when it was feared they had offended any white person.

In 1918, Congressman Leonidas Dyer introduced a bill into Congress to end lynching by making it a federal crime. The Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill was defeated by a prolonged filibuster – “talking the bill to death” – by white Southern Democrats. Opponents of the bill claimed that the mere threat of lynching protected white women from sexual advances from Black men. Despite its approval in the House, Southern Democrats filibustered it in the Senate, and on December 4, 1922, it was officially abandoned.

Close to six million Black Americans fled the South between 1910 and 1970 in what was known as the Great Migration. Many explained that they fled out of the fear of lynching.

Sources:

Equal Justice Initiative. (2017). Lynching in America: Confronting the legacy of racial terror. 3d edition.

<https://lynchinginamerica.eji.org/report/>

NAACP. (n.d.) History of lynching in America. <https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/history-lynching-america>

PBS. (n.d.). Lynching in America. Report. <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/emmett-lynching-america/>