



0. A SHAMEFUL LEGACY - Story Preface

1. FREEDOM DAY

2. EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION LIMITATIONS

3. SLAVERY IS WRONG

4. THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION

5. THE SOUTH REJOINS THE UNION

6. BAD DECISIONS MAKE BAD LAW

7. WHAT WERE JIM CROW LAWS?

8. FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

9. THE INFAMOUS LAWS

10. A SHAMEFUL LEGACY

From the U.S. National Archives, this image shows us that the U.S. military was still segregated during World War II. The MP (military policeman), depicted on his motorcycle, is in Columbus, Georgia on the 13th of April, 1942. NARA's caption tells us that he "stands ready to answer all calls around his area." PD

In the worst travesty of all, the Supreme Court of the United States (with [Justice Harlan](#) as the lone dissenter and [Justice Brewer](#) not participating) failed to overturn Jim Crow laws. The high court gave its tacit blessing to "separate but equal" laws in [Plessy v Ferguson](#). Here is a partial quote from the court's decision:

...We consider the underlying fallacy of the plaintiff's [Plessy's] argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it.

It is fair to ask: "What other construction could possibly apply?"

Here's what Justice Harlan thought about it. His dissent accurately described the pernicious nature of the Court's decision:

The thin disguise of "equal" accommodations for passengers in railroad coaches will not mislead anyone, nor atone for the wrong this day done.

The Supreme Court, after *Plessy*, moved from affirming laws which *allowed* segregation to approving laws which *required* it.

As the judiciary helped to create America's apartheid, the executive and legislative branches of the federal government did nothing to stop it. Before long, Mississippi even passed a law which made it illegal for anyone to promote the *concept* of equality:

Any person ... urging or presenting for public acceptance or general information ... arguments or suggestions in favor of social equality ... shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to fine ... or imprisonment ... or both.

Americans still struggle with the fact that race laws restricting the lives and livelihood of people could have been passed in the "land of the free and the home of the brave." Citizens who endured those laws - and others, like the [Freedom Riders](#), who actively challenged them - still remember the humiliation.

To raise the consciousness of all Americans about the negative impact of discrimination - and to directly protest the death of Jimmie Lee Jackson who had been shot by an Alabama State Trooper - civil-rights activists

attempted to march peacefully from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama on the 7th of March, 1965.

When the marchers reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge, in Selma, "the law" turned forcefully against them with clubs and tear gas. The event became known as "Bloody Sunday."

Undeterred, about 2,000 marchers headed for the Bridge again, two days later. This time they were led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Answering King's call for support, many white pastors were part of the second attempt. Facing another blockade of police, Dr. King and the marchers knelt to pray, then turned around and left the bridge.

With a federal court order backing their protest march, demonstrators set out again on the 21st of March. By the time they reached the court house in Montgomery, about 25,000 people had joined them.

President Johnson, impressed by the dignity of the protestors - especially when compared to "the law" which should have protected them - introduced voting-rights legislation to members of Congress on the 17th of March. The measure was intended to stop the unfairly complicated voter-registration process for African-Americans.

When the voting-rights bill became law, LBJ sent a telegram to Dr. King, inviting him to attend the signing ceremony.

Lingering effects of legal discrimination were still publicly displayed in 1971, when deplorable conditions, for inmates of color, resulted in the Attica Prison Riot. The uprising revealed little had changed, despite the official abandonment of Jim Crow.

Viewing the past with modern eyes, one wonders how such race laws could have been acceptable in so many states. But even allowing for different times, and a different culture, it is incomprehensible that the United States Supreme Court upheld them for so many decades.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-SHAMEFUL-LEGACY-Jim-Crow-Laws>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-SHAMEFUL-LEGACY-Jim-Crow-Laws>

Media Stream

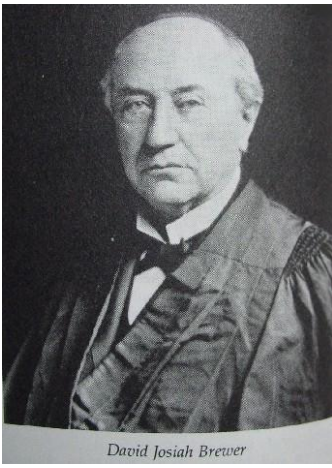


Justice John Marshall Harlan

Image, courtesy U.S. National Archives

Quoted passage, from *Plessy v Ferguson* dissent by Justice Harlan.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Justice-John-Marshall-Harlan>



Justice David J. Brewer

Image, courtesy U.S. Supreme Court.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Justice-David-J.-Brewer>

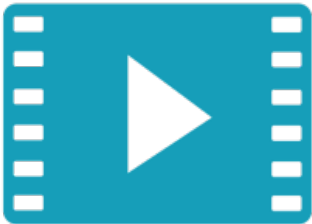


Selma-to-Montgomery "Bloody Sunday" - Video Compilation

Compilation of historical footage, by Universal Newsreels, online courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Selma-to-Montgomery-Bloody-Sunday-Video-Compilation>



Civil Rights - Selma to Montgomery - March 21, 1965

Documentary of the Selma-to-Montgomery Civil-Rights March which began on March 21, 1965.

Online, courtesy the Sharff family, via YouTube.

Director: Stefan Sharff

Cameramen:

Stefan Sharff

Christopher Harris

Julian Krainin

Alan Jacobs

Norris Eisenbrey

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Civil-Rights-Selma-to-Montgomery-March-21-1965>

Civil Rights - Selma to Montgomery, Part 2

Documentary of the Selma-to-Montgomery Civil-Rights March which began on March 21, 1965.

Online, courtesy the Sharff family, via YouTube.

Director: Stefan Sharff

Cameramen:

Stefan Sharff

Christopher Harris

Julian Krainin

Alan Jacobs

Norris Eisenbrey

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Civil-Rights-Selma-to-Montgomery-Part-2>

