

Seasonal Healing

Black History Month The Life and Times of Jim Crow

By Henry A. Thomas

[Thomas Darmouth Rice](#), one of the white pioneers in comic representation of blacks, saw [Jim Crow](#), "some where in Kentucky or Ohio" and immortalized him in dialect and song,

*Wheel about and turn about
and do just so.
Every time I wheel about
I jump Jim Crow*

James Crow is an unknown soldier, some writers say he was a

It is no wonder, then, in this strange climate of equality of oppression, that a strong bond of sympathy developed between black and white indentured servants, who formed the bulk of the population in the first colonies. Black and white servants worked together in the fields, lived in the same huts, and fraternized after hours.

By 1901 Jim Crow was a part of the marrow of America. But he was no longer singing. The song and dance had turned man mean. He had become a wall, a system, a way of separating people from people.

Cincinnati Ohio Slave. This writer believes he was a Charleston, S.C. slave. [Various writers](#) say the Crow came from old man Crow, the slaveholder; others say the Crow came from the simile, black as a crow. Wheeling about and turning about and jumping just so, "Daddy" Rick shuffled across the stage at New York's Bowery Theater in 1832 and gave America it's first international song hit.

By 1838 Jim Crow was wedged into the language as a synonym of Negro. A noun, a verb, an adjective, a "comic" way of life.

By 1839 there was an antislavery book: The History of Jim Crow.

By 1841 there was a Jim Crow railroad car - in Massachusetts, of all places.

By 1901 Jim Crow was a part of the marrow of America. But he was no longer singing. The

song and dance had turned man mean. He had become a wall, a system, a way of separating people from people. Demagogue by demagogue, mania by mania, brick by brick, the wall was built, and by the 1890's America was two Nations - one black, one white, separate and unequal.

The cornerstones of the great wall were two taboos; interracial eating and intermarriage. Any thing approaching interracial eating was proscribed. Any thing which might by any stretch of the imagination lead to intermarriage was interdicted. One law led to a hundred. One fear became a nightmare of ropes and chains.

It was okay for the white man to have his black woman, but death for one or maybe both for the black man and white woman.

In South Carolina, Cole L. Blease said it best, "Whenever the constitution comes between me and the virtue of a white woman of the south, I say to hell with the constitution." This took root from 1609, Sin, Sex, Race. These words took deep roots, intertwined and became one in the puritan psyche.

In the famous sermon delivered at White Chapel for Virginia-bound planters, the s in a stern admonition against amalgamation. f Abraham, who left his country and his fathers epared for his seed. Abrams posterite, "the eparaphors [MUST] keep to themselves. They may not marry nor give in marriage to the heathen, they are uncircumcised...The breaking of this rule, may break the neck of all good success of voyage, whereas by keeping the fear of God, the planters in short time, by the blessing of God, may grow into a nation formidable to all the endeavors of Christ.

The cornerstones of the great wall were two taboos; interracial eating and intermarriage.

Because of human nature, this was easier said than done. From the very beginning, English Colonists, following Abraham' example, married and mated with Hagar. Not only did white men break the White Chapel rule but white women showed such a preference for black meant that planters organized a century long campaign of terror and intimidation.

Proscription began early. In 1630, a bare twenty one years after the White Chapel sermon, one Hugh Davis was soundly whipped before an assemblage of Negroes and others for abusing himself to the dishonor of God and the shame of Christians by defiling his body in lying with a Negro woman. "Forty years alter, Colonial males were whipping white woman at the post and selling them into slavery to keep them from black males. There were many reasons for the broad tolerance of the first white Americans. The first, unbelievable as it may seem now, is that the pioneer white women and the pioneer white men, did not know they were white. There was no conception then, and no name, for whiteness. There was, secondly, no organized system of racism to define and focus the fears and anxieties of whites. Third, and most important, most of the white colonist were indentured servants, who were subjected to the same indignities as black servants and slaves and were held in equal contempt. It is no wonder, then, in this strange climate of equality of oppression, that a strong bond of sympathy developed between black and white indentured servants, who formed the bulk of the population in the first colonies. Black and white servants worked together in the fields, lived in the same huts, and fraternized after hours.

"Brought together", as one white historian put it and white servants mated and married. No matter what puritans said, against all odds, we stuck with it, and hundreds of years later as a result.

In the years 2009, we, black and white gave the world our first Black president. Son to a white mother and a black father...that, my dear reader is Black and White history.

**Sonny Thomas, is a published writer, poet and activist
who enjoys traveling.**