

Jim Crow-Era Segregation Plaquesin00034219566

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Summary Information

Repository:	Rare Book and Manuscript Library
Title:	Jim Crow-Era Segregation Plaques
ID:	in00034219566
ID:	MS#2240
Date [inclusive]:	1927-1931
Physical Description:	3 linear feet 3 plaques
Language of the Material:	English

Preferred Citation

Identification of specific item; Date (if known); Jim Crow-Era Segregation Plaques; Box and Folder; Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Columbia University Library.

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Biographical / Historical

The Jim Crow era (roughly 1877–1960s) was a legalized racial caste system, primarily in the South, that enforced segregation and second-class citizenship for African Americans.

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Content Description

Three metal plaques representative of segregation signage during the Jim Crow Era.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Controlled Access Headings

- African Americans -- Legal status, laws, etc.
- Black people -- Segregation

Collection Inventory

Plaque 1

Title/Description	Instances
"Colored Waiting Room", 1927, 1927	box 1

Scope and Contents

Jim Crow-era segregation enforcement sign reading "COLORED WAITING ROOM." United States, ca. 1927. Heavy rectangular plaque, approx. 11" x 4.5", embossed with raised block lettering: COLORED WAITING ROOM. Original turquoise paint over rusted

iron base, exhibiting wear consistent with age and public display. Manufacturer markings at lower corners indicating location or maker, now difficult to make out. Date appears to read "September 15, 1927". This Jim Crow-era sign was used to demarcate racially segregated facilities like train depots, bus stations, and courthouse, mandated under "separate but equal" laws institutionalized by Plessy v. Ferguson (1896) and not legally overturned until the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Such signs were omnipresent in the American South and border states, reinforcing white supremacy through segregation, designating African Americans as second-class citizens within public space. Such signs illustrate how institutionalized racism was not only present but constantly reinforced in everyday life throughout the 20th century.

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Plaque 2

Title/Description	Instances
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"Colored Must Sit in Balcony", 1931, 1931

box 1

Scope and Contents

Jim Crow-era segregation enforcement sign reading "COLORED MUST SIT IN BALCONY." United States, 1931. Heavy rectangular cast iron plaque, approx. 10" x 4.5", embossed with raised block lettering. Issued by Ace Sign Company; dated 14 July 1931. Original white paint over rusted iron base, exhibiting wear consistent with age and public display. This Jim Crow-era sign was used to demarcate a racially segregated theater, in which Black patrons were instructed to sit only in the balcony section. Such signs were omnipresent in the American South and border states, reinforcing white supremacy through segregation and designating African Americans as second-class citizens within public spaces

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Plaque 3

Title/Description	Instances
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"We Serve Colored Carry Out Only", 1931

box 1

Scope and Contents

Jim Crow-era segregation enforcement sign reading "WE SERVE COLORED CARRY OUT ONLY." United

States, 1931. Heavy rectangular plaque, approx. 10" x 4.5", embossed with raised block lettering and date "MAY 5, 1931." Lower left corner bears maker's stamp ("A.A. SIGNS"). Original white paint over over rusted iron base, exhibiting wear consistent with age and public display. This Jim Crow-era sign was used to demarcate a lesser-remembered form of segregation, prohibiting African Americans from dining inside restaurants and permitting only carry-out service. Such policies, widespread in the Jim Crow South, were part of a broader effort to prevent interracial social proximity and to enforce racial hierarchy and white supremacy. "Carry Out Only" signage is significantly scarcer than entrance or drinking-fountain signs, as it addressed specific restaurant practices rather than generalized public facilities.

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