



Examples of Black Codes: Mississippi

Black codes were laws that restricted the freedom and movement of Black people and forced them to work for low wages. Though they existed before the Civil War throughout the U.S., most of these laws were passed in the South from 1865–1866. Below are some examples of Black codes from one state. As you review them, note what freedoms each law was trying to limit or take away.

SOME BLACK CODES IN MISSISSIPPI

WHAT FREEDOMS WERE LIMITED OR TAKEN AWAY?

All freedmen, free negroes and mulattoes in this State, over the age of eighteen years...with no lawful employment or business, or found unlawfully assembling themselves together, either in the day or night time...shall be deemed vagrants [beggars, drifters], and on conviction thereof shall be fined in a sum not exceeding...fifty dollars...and imprisoned at the discretion of the court [but] not exceeding ten days.

Gathering/assembling with others
Moving around freely

All contracts for labor made with freedmen, free negroes, and mulattoes for a longer period than one month shall be in writing... and if the laborer shall quit the service of the employer before the expiration of his term of service, without good cause, he shall forfeit [surrender] his wages for that year up to the time of quitting.

...It shall not be lawful for any freedman, free negro, or mulatto to intermarry with any white person; nor for any white person to intermarry with any freedman, free negro, or mulatto; and any person who shall so intermarry, shall be deemed guilty...[and] confined in the State penitentiary for life.

If any freedman, free negro, or mulatto, convicted of any of the misdemeanors [crimes]...shall fail or refuse for the space of five days, after conviction, to pay the fine and costs imposed, such person shall be hired out by the sheriff or other officer...to any white person who will pay said fine and all costs, and take said convict for the shortest time.



Examples of Black Codes: Louisiana

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SOME BLACK CODES IN LOUISIANA

WHAT FREEDOMS WERE LIMITED OR TAKEN AWAY?

Every negro is required to be in the regular service [employment] of some white person, or former owner, who shall be held responsible for the conduct of said negro. But said employer or former owner may permit said negro to hire his own time [get additional work] by special permission in writing, which permission shall not extend over seven days at any one time.

Independence
Decision making
Choosing a job

No negro shall be permitted to rent or keep a house within said parish [community]. Any negro violating this provision shall be immediately ejected and compelled to find an employer; and any person who shall rent, or give the use of any house to any negro, in violation of this section, shall pay a fine of five dollars for each offence.

No public meetings or congregations of negroes shall be allowed within said parish [community] after sunset; but such public meetings and congregations may be held between the hours of sunrise and sunset, by the special permission in writing of the captain of patrol [police], within whose beat such meetings shall take place...

No negro shall be permitted to preach...or otherwise declaim [make public speeches] to congregations of colored people, without a special permission in writing from the president of the police jury.

SOURCES:

Central Piedmont Community College, "Black Code and Jim Crow Law examples," <https://sites.google.com/a/email.cpcc.edu/black-codes-and-jim-crow/black-code-and-jim-crow-law-examples>.

Cengage Learning, "Louisiana Black Code," <https://college.cengage.com/history/us/resources/students/primary/blackcode.htm>.



Examples of Black Codes: Florida

Black codes were laws that restricted the freedom and movement of Black people and forced them to work for low wages. Though they existed before the Civil War throughout the U.S., most of these laws were passed in the South from 1865-1866. Below are some examples of Black codes from one state. As you review them, note what freedoms each law was trying to limit or take away.

SOME BLACK CODES IN FLORIDA

WHAT FREEDOMS WERE LIMITED OR TAKEN AWAY?

No person shall be a Representative [elected to office] unless he be a white man, a citizen of the United States, and shall have been an inhabitant of the State two years next preceding his election...

Representing one's community

Working in government

Participating in democracy

... If any white female resident within this State shall...attempt to intermarry...with any negro, mulatto, or other person of color, she shall be deemed to be guilty of a misdemeanor [crime], and upon conviction shall be fined in a sum not exceeding one thousand dollars, to be confined in the public jail not exceeding three months, or both...and shall...be disqualified to testify as a witness against any white person.

...It shall not be lawful for any negro, mulatto, or other person of color, to own, use or keep in his possession or under his control, any Bowie-knife, dirk, sword, fire-arms or ammunition of any kind, unless he first obtain a license to do so from the Judge...and any negro, mulatto, or other person of color, so offending...shall be sentenced to stand in the pillory [wooden post] for one hour, or be whipped, not exceeding thirty-nine stripes, or both...

...If any negro, mulatto, or other person of color, shall intrude himself into any religious or other public assembly of white persons, or into any railroad car or other public vehicle set apart for the exclusive accommodation of white people, he shall...be sentenced to stand in the pillory [wooden post] for one hour, or be whipped, not exceeding thirty-nine stripes, or both...