A Sampling of Jim Crow Laws in Southern States

Following the end of Reconstruction, the landmark Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson in 1896 affirmed a state’s rights to segregate whites and blacks so long as the facilities were “separate but equal.” Below is a sampling of segregation laws from a variety of southern states. These laws later became known as Jim Crow laws; named after the stereotypical depiction of African-Americans called ‘Jumpin’ Jim Crow.’

**Directions:** Read through the following laws and infer why each law was created. (What behavior are they trying to limit? What does this law saw about how African Americans are viewed?)

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| **Law** | **Rank** |
| **Nurses**: No person or corporation shall require any white female nurse to nurse in wards or rooms in hospitals, either public private, in which Negro men are placed. (Alabama) |  |
| **Inference:** |
| **Buses**: All passenger stations in this state operated by any motor transportation company shall have separate waiting rooms or space and separate ticket windows for the white and colored races. (Alabama) |  |
| **Inference**: |
| **Bathrooms**: Every employer of white or Negro males shall provide for such white or Negro males reasonably accessible and separate toilet facilities. (Alabama) |  |
| **Inference**: |
| **Intermarriage**: The marriage of a person of Caucasian blood with a Negro, Mongolian, Malay, or Hindu shall be null and void. (Arizona) |  |
| **Inference**: |
| **Cohabitation**: Any Negro man and white woman, or any white man and Negro woman, who are not married to each other, who shall habitually live in and occupy in the nighttime the same room shall be punished by imprisonment not exceeding twelve months, or by fine not exceeding five hundred dollars. (Florida) |  |
| **Inference**: |
| **Education**: The schools for white children and the schools for Negro children shall be conducted separately. (Florida) |  |
| **Inference**: |
| **Burial**: The officer in charge shall not bury, or allow to be buried, any colored persons upon grounds set apart or used for the burial of white persons. (Georgia) |  |
| **Inference**: |
| **The Blind**: The board of trustees shall…maintain a separate building…on separate ground for the admission, care, instruction, and support of all blind persons of the colored or black race. (Louisiana) |  |
| **Inference**: |
| **Lunch Counters**: No persons, firms, or corporations, who or which furnish meals to passengers at station restaurants or station eating houses, in times limited by common carriers of said passengers, shall furnish said meals to white and colored passengers in the same room, or at the same table, or at the same counter. (North Carolina) |  |
| **Inference**: |

**Directions:** Imagine you are civil rights lawyer. Which laws are most important to challenge in court in order to change American attitudes toward blacks? Rank the laws in order of importance (1 being most important)

1. Why did these laws exist?
2. Explain your top 3 rankings. Why will repealing these laws change American attitudes toward blacks?