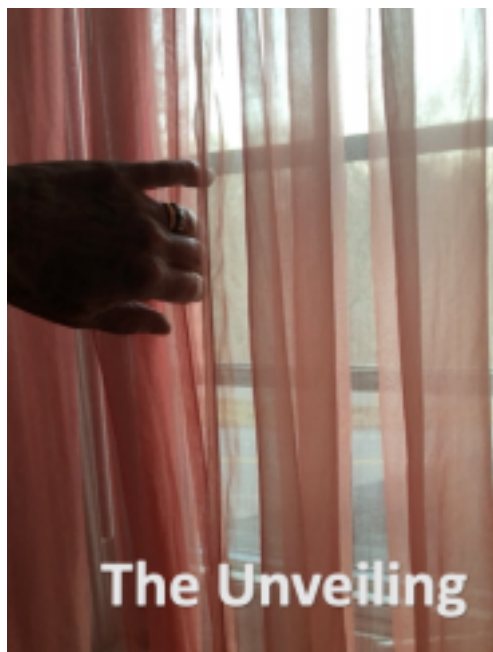


## ***The Unveiling*** **Our Little known History**



### **What?! Jim Crow is from Louisville Kentucky??**

We're all familiar with the term "Jim Crow," which refers to strict laws enacted all over the South to limit the rights of freed Black people. The Civil War and Reconstruction had brought the possibility of racial equality to the South. But ten years after the war ended, US federal troops pulled out, and without their oversight, white southerners immediately began eradicating Black freedoms with new laws aimed at keeping them in subservient roles. These laws,

"Black Codes," were a type of new Slavery. At some point they became referred to as "Jim Crow."

Where did this term come from? Well, legend says, right here in Louisville, Kentucky.

A traveling northern minstrel man named Thomas Dartmouth "Daddy" Rice is said to have been performing in Louisville in the 1830's. The Southern Theatre overlooked a livery stable owned by a man named Crowe. In the stable, worked an old Black slave. By some reports, the old man had physical deformities such as a crooked shoulder and a limp. But he danced and sang to himself as he worked. Watching him, Thomas Rice saw opportunity. He studied the man's movements, his poor, ragged clothing, his manner of speech, the song he sang. When Rice later went onstage in the character of the old slave, his face was charcoaled black and his clothes were dirtied; he used exaggerated expressions and Black vernacular to portray a foolish, lazy, untrustworthy Black man who joyously danced a little jig. Rice called the character Jim Crow. Audiences from Louisville to New York City went wild with delight.



So there you have it: white people were not satisfied to simply demean the Black race by forcing them to toil under the cruelty of slavery. No. They took pleasure in further degradation by stereotyping and mocking them in these traveling shows that were the MOST POPULAR form of entertainment from the 1830s-1900s. Many other performers took up the blackface and stereotypical depiction, touring their shows all over the country. Film entertainers such as Fred Astaire ("Swing Time," 1936), Judy Garland ("Everybody Sing," 1938), even Mickey Mouse in "Mickey's Mellerdrama" from 1933 all wore blackface. Check out the Mickey Mouse cartoon -- and notice that the background music is My Old Kentucky

Home.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dw06K0dG1Zw>

These portrayals no doubt furthered white Americans' negative attitudes toward Black people. Jim Crow became a derogatory label for Blacks and, ultimately, was the term adopted for laws that limited their full integration into American life.

Short video on the history of Blackface:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pqID-eZm1ck> "Blackface: A Cultural History of a Racist Artform"

More about Daddy Rice and his Jim Crow performance:

<https://prabook.com/web/thomas.rice/3761201>