

John Bennett's Prefatory Remarks before *The Loving Story*

Let me begin with a quirky, idiosyncratic timeline of American history:

In **1619**, a year *before* the arrival of the Mayflower, 20 African slaves were sold to settlers in Virginia as "indentured servants."

The US Constitution was adopted in **1789** with a slave counted as three-fifths of a person for purposes of representation.

The first "Jim Crow" law was passed in **1870** in Tennessee mandating the separation of African Americans from whites on trains, in depots and on wharves. In short order, the rest of the South fell into step. By the end of the century, African Americans were banned from white hotels, barber shops, restaurants, theaters and other public accommodations. By **1885**, most Southern states also have laws requiring separate schools.

In **1896** in Plessy v. Ferguson, the Supreme Court ruled that state laws requiring separation of the races were within the bounds of the Constitution as long as equal accommodations were made for African Americans, thus establishing the "separate but equal" doctrine of legal segregation.

A friend who'd been assigned to a position at the Pentagon was showing my wife around and mentioned that one of the nice things was you never had to go far to find a bathroom, for the Pentagon had been built **during WW II** with twice as many bathrooms as would otherwise have been specified for a building of its size. This was in accordance with the Virginia Separation of Races law.

U.S. armed forces were not desegregated until **1948** (three years after the end of the war), when President Truman issued an executive order calling for "equality of treatment for all persons in the armed services, without regard to race, color, religion or national origin."

In **1952** the Tuskegee Institute reported that, for the first time in the 71 years it had been keeping records, there was no lynching of an African American during the year.

Yesterday, June 19, was the anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of **1964**. We tend to forget that it was approved only after having survived an 83-day filibuster in the US Senate.

In **1966** officials in Wetumpka, Alabama, refused to permit the burial of the city's first Vietnam War casualty except in the paupers' section of the city's segregated cemetery.

And one last date: In **2000** Alabama became the last state to overturn a law banning interracial marriage.