

Together: An Inspiring Response to the “Separate-But-Equal” Supreme Court Decision That Divided America

Amy Nathan

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Amy Nathan’s inspiring book covers two families on opposite sides of the legacy of Jim Crow.

On June 7, 1892, Homer Plessy, an Black shoemaker from New Orleans, bought a first class train ticket to Covington, Louisiana. When the train arrived, Plessy took his seat. Less than three blocks away from the station, the trip came to an end, and Plessy found himself arrested for being a Black man traveling in a train car for white people. Plessy found himself in court, and Judge John Ferguson found him guilty of breaking the law.

What seemed like a minor occurrence was, in fact, part of a bigger plan to challenge The Separate Car Act of 1890, which introduced segregated train seating in Louisiana. The purpose was to end the deliberate erosion of the rights awarded to people of color in the South during Reconstruction. On April 13, 1896, the United States Supreme Court considered the case, now known as *Plessy v. Ferguson*, and ruled in favor of The Separate Car Act, thus making *Plessy v. Ferguson* the precedent that opened the floodgates of racial segregation in the South, also known as Jim Crow.

Interwoven with a detailed history of the events that led up to *Plessy v. Ferguson* is the story of the friendship between Judge Ferguson and Homer Plessy’s descendants, Phoebe Ferguson and Keith Plessy, and their joint work to continue the dismantling of the legacy of Jim Crow. Nathan’s history of race in the South is detailed, honest, and multifaceted, and Phoebe and Keith’s story is inspiring.

Together is an accessible multigenerational story that shows the importance of acknowledging the complicated past when building a stronger future.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (January / February 2021)

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