The Jim Crow Museum houses over nine thousand artifacts; the majority of the objects were created between the 1870s and the 1960s. The largest portion of the museum's holdings is anti-black memorabilia, for example, mammy candles, Nellie fishing lures, picaninny ashtrays, sambo masks, and lawn jockeys. These objects both shaped and reflected attitudes toward African Americans during the Jim Crow era. The museum also displays Jim Crow memorabilia—books, signs, tickets, brochures, and photographs—that promoted racial segregation.

The museum demonstrates how racist ideas and anti-black images were pervasive within American culture. It also shows how these images and ideas have resurfaced in recent years. Stories about African American achievements during the Jim Crow era, along with artifacts of the Civil Rights Movement, are also found within the museum.

Many of the artifacts and media pieces within the Jim Crow Museum contain explicit images of violence, nudity, offensive language, and other mature themes. Because of this, the museum is recommended for those 12 years of age and older.

Although we strongly suggest that all children under 18 years of age be accompanied by an adult, children younger than 12 years of age must be accompanied by an adult.
**Why is this museum important?**

Many of today’s students have only a vague understanding of the dreadful impact of Jim Crow laws and customs. More specifically, they lack a fundamental knowledge of restrictive covenants, literacy tests, poll taxes, and other oppressive features of the Jim Crow racial hierarchy. The Jim Crow Museum is a powerful teaching tool, offering students an opportunity to learn about this important period in the history of the United States.

Most of the objects displayed in the museum were created with the intent of belittling and humiliating African Americans. These objects are difficult to view. Nevertheless, the museum’s staff believes that these objects can be used to fuel intelligent discussions about race, race relations, and racism.

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**Promoting Social Justice**

Woodbridge N. Ferris, the founder of Ferris Institute (now Ferris State University), challenged faculty, staff, and students to "make the world a better place." The Jim Crow Museum is one attempt by the university to improve the world. This is seen in the museum’s mission to "use objects of intolerance to teach tolerance and promote social justice." The university and the museum are committed to creating a society that values human rights and recognizes the dignity of every person.