

Segregated water fountains

This is a black and white photograph called / entitled "Segregated water fountains", taken by photographer Elliot Ervitt in the 1950's in North Carolina. It's a gelatin silver print of 16.5 by 25 centimeters. We can see two water fountains, one for white people and one for colored people. The white water fountain is better than the water fountain for colored people, it's newer, cleaner, bigger, more practical and more modern. The colored water fountain is older and more broken. In other words the white water fountain is superior to the colored water fountain as to show the superiority of white people over colored people.

This picture illustrates the period of segregation in the USA. Segregation is the separation of white and black people in society (in buses, in schools, in cinemas...)

Tuesday, December 8th

On the picture, the black man is drinking from the colored water fountain even if there is nobody to see him because he is conditioned. He is used to being considered inferior to white people, it has become a habit. It's normal to everyone.

But there is hope: the man is turning to look at the white fountain as if he is becoming aware of the inequalities between blacks and whites (c.f motion blur).

This is a very powerful photograph because it tells every thing about segregation even though we don't know anything about the historical background.

Segregation started in 1876 with the Jim Crow laws.