**(CNN)***Editor's note: This story*[*was originally published*](http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/13/politics/tbt-loving-v-virginia/index.html)*for CNN on April 13, 2017.*

A century after the end of the Civil War, [more than a dozen](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/us/06loving.html) states still had laws on the books banning interracial marriage. Enter Mildred and Richard Loving, a Virginia couple whose June 12, 1967 Supreme Court ruling dealt a major blow to miscegenation laws.

The couple [married in 1958](https://www.aclu.org/feature/loving) in Washington -- where interracial marriage was legal -- then moved to their home in Central Point, Virginia. Weeks later, the local sheriff came into their home in the middle of the night and they were charged with violating several Virginia codes, [including one](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/us/06loving.html) that made it "unlawful for any white person in the state to marry any save a white person."

It was also illegal for people to leave the state for the purpose of avoiding miscegenation laws, and such marriages were considered "[absolutely void](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/us/06loving.html)" in the state of Virginia.

Mildred was a black woman, but her[New York Times obituary](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/us/06loving.html)says that she preferred to think of herself as Indian, since her parents were both part Native American. Virginia had different forms of miscegenation laws on the books stretching back to the 1600s, and the state's [1924 Racial Integrity Act](https://lva.omeka.net/exhibits/show/law_and_justice/right_to_marry/racial_integrity_act) defined anyone who wasn't entirely white as "colored" -- the only exception was made for those who were 1/16 Native American, but even that had [restrictions](http://time.com/4362508/loving-v-virginia-personas/).

Mr. and Mrs. Loving pleaded guilty and were sentenced to either a year in prison or a 25-year banishment from the state. They [chose the latter](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/us/06loving.html), moved to Washington and had three children. In 1967, they were arrested while visiting Virginia. Mildred wrote to the US attorney general -- a man by the name of Robert Kennedy -- for help, and he referred her to the [ACLU](https://www.aclu.org/feature/loving).

The case's [path to the Supreme Court](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/06/us/06loving.html) was an interesting one, however, since the couple had said they were guilty and had no right to an appeal. The case found itself in the Virginia Supreme Court before landing in Washington.

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