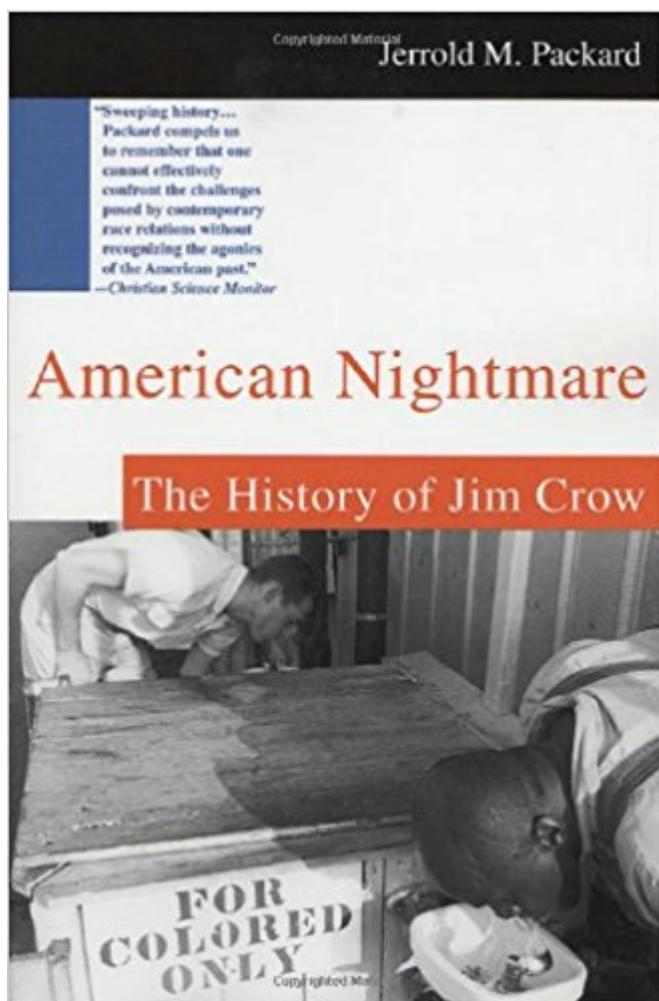


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American Nightmare: The History Of Jim Crow



Synopsis

For a hundred years after the end of the Civil War, a quarter of all Americans lived under a system of legalized segregation called Jim Crow. Together with its rigidly enforced canon of racial "etiquette," these rules governed nearly every aspect of life--and outlined draconian punishments for infractions. The purpose of Jim Crow was to keep African Americans subjugated at a level as close as possible to their former slave status. Exceeding even South Africa's notorious apartheid in the humiliation, degradation, and suffering it brought, Jim Crow left scars on the American psyche that are still felt today. American Nightmare examines and explains Jim Crow from its beginnings to its end: how it came into being, how it was lived, how it was justified, and how, at long last, it was overcome only a few short decades ago. Most importantly, this book reveals how a nation founded on principles of equality and freedom came to enact as law a pervasive system of inequality and virtual slavery. Although America has finally consigned Jim Crow to the historical graveyard, Jerrold Packard shows why it is important that this scourge--and an understanding of how it happened--remain alive in the nation's collective memory.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a clear, concise, historical narrative of a draconian reality: how U.S. legal statutes were partially generated by, and in turn bolstered, racist social conditions and entrenched customs. Writing simply and with passion, Packard (Victoria's Daughters) begins with the surprising fact that African-Americans, as well as whites, were first brought to America as indentured servants. But by 1670, laws were in place that consigned African-Americans to slavery. While not offering any new or

startling analysis, the strength of the book is its accumulation of detail. Packard's background on Homer Plessy, whose case generated the Supreme Court's 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision legally codifying "separate but equal," is moving. Teddy Roosevelt's landmark White House dinner with Booker T. Washington is shown to have been a casual invitation, not a planned political move. A 1969 study showed that less than 1% of African-Americans worshiped with their white counterparts. One of the nine high school students needing the assistance of Federal troops in 1957 to attend the newly integrated school in Little Rock, Ark., was later expelled for responding to racist taunts. Packard carefully places these facts in a firm historical context. Even when the material is familiar, he weaves it into a sturdy and often shocking American tapestry. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Packard, whose recent works have included books on the British royalty (*Victoria's Daughters*) and World War II (*Neither Friend Nor Foe*), here chronicles the history of Jim Crow from its biblical origins in the story of Ham to the heroic efforts of civil rights activists in the 1960s. The book details how Jim Crow laws pervaded all aspects of Southern social life including schools, churches, restaurants, libraries, and even cemeteries (a 1900 Mississippi law allowed black corpses to be dug up from "white" cemeteries). The book also focuses on Jim Crow's being almost as widespread in the North, especially as African Americans moved northward for better-paying jobs during the early to mid-20th century when European immigration dwindled. The book is essentially a summation of important people, events, and court cases that led to the end of legalized Jim Crow. Packard's casual style reads easily, but the book suffers from its use of mostly secondary sources.

Recommended for libraries seeking a readable overview of the Jim Crow era. [Readers interested in primary-source material on the Jim Crow era should refer to *Remembering Jim Crow*, LJ 10/1/01.]

Robert K. Flatley, Frostburg State Univ., M.- Robert K. Flatley, Frostburg State Univ., MD Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A must read for anyone that wants to know the true, political, and time line and history of the black population in the USA. It is indeed a shame on us to allow a brutal form of slavery in the first place. But even more shameful to allow a political, and legal way around the emancipation proclamation that was won by the Civil War, and signed by President Lincoln. Read about how southern politics and culture created a Jim Crow system to keep black citizens below dignity, and as a low class sub culture. It was not until the 1960's that Jim Crow was defeated in Washington D.C for the whole country. You may be surprised that it was Southern Democrats that fought to keep the black people

down as slaves. Even Democrats in the White House.

Very informative about a time I lived through growing up. I was raised in the more Northern state of Indiana and was surprised to learn of the KKK history there. Most of my school vacations were spent on Kentucky and Tennessee - and the one thing that stands out to me was the whiteness of everywhere I went and hearing the "n" word used a lot which always upset me. I had almost no interaction with children of color until in 1969 - integrated school bussing was ordered. I remember being afraid of them and they seemed scared of us. This book opened my eyes to how rough the black community had it,

I wish I read this book when I was 20. Every student in highschool should be reading this book. Knowing what the country's history is can help a young person navigate the place you call home. This book is the kind of book that could possibly catapult a student's curiosity into the real history of the United States.

This should be required reading in all high schools. It is tough to stomach, but necessary. I was a child and young teen during the late fifties and early sixties and recall many of the incidents that occurred during those years. The book explains many issues the country and the South still faces. Young friends graduating from college this year are getting it as part of their graduation present.

I grew up in the South and knew a little about Jim Crow laws. I didn't realize this was a national problem and how African Americans were entrapped by this "social" system. Every aspect of life was controlled by Jim Crow. It's a great resource for someone trying to understand why white-black relations are still so troubled today.

This is the best treatment of this subject I have read. It includes chapters on slavery, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the two World Wars and the Civil Rights Movement. It is very well written and compelling. Seldom have I read such insight into the mindset of the South during Jim Crow. The impact of the Second World War and the Cold War on the Civil Rights movement was something I had not fully appreciated before.

A very detailed look at the laws from the Reconstruction on to the civil rights movement of the 60's. It gave me insight into a very dark part of American life, that I have never fully appreciated. I never

really understood all of what was going on and this puts a lot into perspective.

I was brought up in the rural Louisiana south in the 50's. I always wondered about the "White Only / Colored Only" signs, but never knew until I read this book that they were the result of LAWS and not just local custom. The book is factual but interesting. I came away with a lot better realization of how our society was back then. I gave a copy to my brother; he likewise appreciated the book and found it very informative.

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