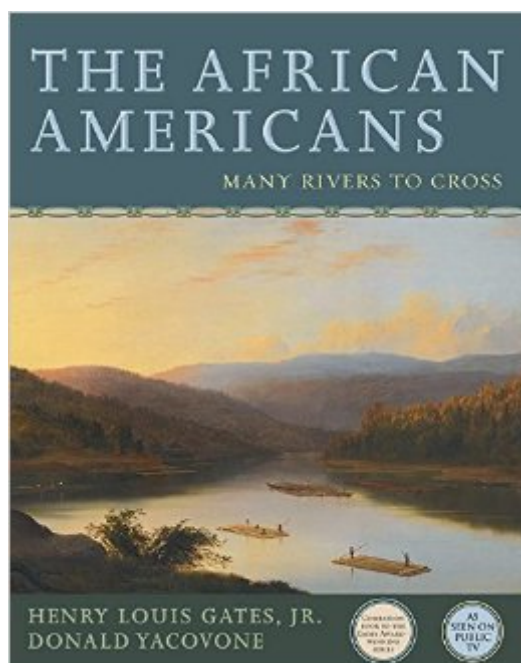


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The African Americans: Many Rivers To Cross



Synopsis

The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross is the companion book to the six-part, six-hour documentary of the same name, which aired on national, prime-time public television in the fall of 2013. The series is the first to air since 1968 that chronicles the full sweep of 500 years of African American history, from the origins of slavery on the African continent and the arrival of the first black conquistador, Juan Garrido, in Florida in 1513, through five centuries of remarkable historic events right up to todayâwhen Barack Obama is serving his second term as President, yet our country remains deeply divided by race and class. The book explores these topics in even more detail than possible in the television series, and examines many other fascinating matters as well, such as the ethnic originsâand the regional and cultural diversityâof the Africans whose enslavement led to the creation of the African American people. It delves into the multiplicity of cultural institutions, political strategies, and religious and social perspectives that African Americans have created in the half a millennium since their African ancestors first arrived on these shores. Like the television series, this book guides readers on an engaging journey through the Black Atlantic worldâfrom Africa and Europe to the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United Statesâto shed new light on what it has meant, and means, to be an African American. By highlighting the complex internal debates and class differences within the Black Experience in this country, readers will learn that the African American community, which black abolitionist Martin R. Delany described as a ânation within a nation,â has never been a truly uniform entity, and that its members have been debating their differences of opinion and belief from their very first days in this country. The road to freedom for black people in America has not been linear; rather, much like the course of a river, it has been full of loops and eddies, slowing and occasionally reversing current. Ultimately, this book emphasizes the idea that African American history encompasses multiple continents and venues, and must be viewed through a transnational perspective to be fully understood.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Smiley Books; 2 edition (February 2, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 140193515X

ISBN-13: 978-1401935153

Product Dimensions: 7.5 x 0.9 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (80 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #294,833 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #218 inÂ Books > History >

Americas > United States > African Americans > History #1673 inÂ Books > Politics & Social

Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > African-American Studies

Customer Reviews

The African Americans is more than a history lesson in paperback. It was written not only for Africans and African Americans, but for anyone who wishes to minimize their own ignorances and cultural stigmas of a people that were once looked upon like savage beasts; stripped of their own homeland and thrust into unfamiliar territory to serve as slaves for hundreds and hundreds of years. The authors do more than just address slavery; this book is much deeper than that. This isn't a book meant to be skimmed and closed shut. No, this is a book that serves to shift our perspective and brings us into a world that enjoyed their own riches long before racial slavery reared its ugly head, long before millions of Africans were snatched from their homeland and taken across the shore ways. How often do we hear about black conquistadors who stood beside the Spaniards and helped them to conquer new lands? Who ever knew of the first black man who stepped foot on the soil of Tampa Bay and Tallahassee? Who even knew of the mulatto who set sail with Christopher Columbus and his fleet? The traditional history books we've learned from in the school systems across America, never focused on the important and rich historical details of Africans and African Americans to this extent. This book is the missing link to not only African/African American history but also to the history of America as a whole. I think it only fair that this part of history shares a seat along with our famed American Presidents, War Heroes, Inventors, Physicians, Scientists etc. We have too many people in America, uneducated and unaware of the rich history of the Africans and African Americans. This book is the ticket to releasing the blindfold of the ignorant and shedding light on the truth about a group of people seen as insignificant in American society. While I do not expect this book to transform lives and the mindsets of all of us overnight, it is still my hope that this book will at least be embraced with an open mind. I appreciate the fact that The African Americans shares a thorough history of the role Africans played in the slave trade and the enslavement of their own people. I also appreciate the fact that the authors took the time to not dwell on the negativity behind slavery but allow the reader to see the accomplishments and perseverance of the oppressed and how they overcame and adjusted to life after the abolishment of slavery. It shifts from the enslaved African American to the African Americans who established Colleges and Institutes, the great African American poets and writers, Harlem Renaissance African Americans, the African

American inventors, the African Americans of the entertainment industry, all the way down to American's first African American President. This book is more than worthy of five stars.

I received the book *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* by co-authors Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Donald Yacovone, free from Hay House Publishing for review. The book seems to be formatted in the fashion of a school textbook, and is divided into nine chapters. Each chapter covers a pivotal stage in the journey of the enslaved Africans, and later their descendents, and includes little-known facts about the history of their more than 500 years in America. There are many stories that are recounted about the courageous struggles and triumphs of this group of immigrants--very often against unimaginable odds. In the end, the descendents of the Africans not only managed to survive, but eventually thrive in their newfound homeland. There are also recorded accounts of the successes of these descendents through the establishment of prosperous towns, institutions of higher learning, and even banking institutions. The irony was that while these prosperous and thriving (segregated) towns were created out of necessity, as African-Americans were violently forced out of mainstream society, envious white citizens somehow felt threatened by this economic progress. Many of these African-American havens across the country were ultimately burned to the ground by mobs of jealous and angry whites, never to recover. Although *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* covers a period of time in American history that many are still ashamed to talk about or even acknowledge, it is not an indictment of Europeans or of the rampant capitalism that drove the slave trade, which eventually sent this country into a civil war. Nor is it a story of victimhood. There may be those who are hesitant to read this book for those reasons or perhaps because of misplaced feelings of guilt, inferiority, or even superiority (which is just inferiority turned inside out). However this book is well researched and balanced, and is best read with an open mind. My only complaint lies with the gloom and doom message about the current so-called state of affairs within the "African-American community" that the authors chose to conclude with. Numbers, statistics, and the never-ending 24-hour news coverage only tell one aspect of a complex story--and usually it's never an accurate one. I felt that the authors were playing this up, as if to suggest that the economic woes that some descendents of the Africans now face are exclusive to only their segment of the population. As long as we continue marginalizing a group of people by seeing them as separate from everyone else--their issues, concerns and struggles somehow different from the general population, then we cease viewing them as part of the human family. Racism is not a national state of mind, it is an attitude carried in the minds of individuals, much like sexism and the numerous other "isms" that color the human perspective. The bleak economic picture painted by the

authors is not something that can be government-regulated, as they seemed to hint at. Indeed, they only have to read the first eight chapters of their book to see that the descendents of the Africans were prosperous and thriving even as they were being considered less than citizens of this country. No government regulation of their economic progress there! In the end, a human being's purpose and the path they choose to follow are their own, and no amount of policy-making or waving of wands has ever been successful in changing individuals into someone else's ideal.

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