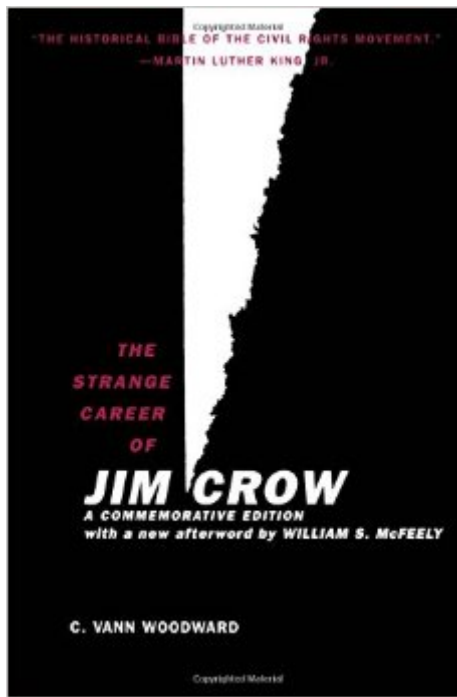


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The Strange Career Of Jim Crow



Synopsis

C. Vann Woodward, who died in 1999 at the age of 91, was America's most eminent Southern historian, the winner of a Pulitzer Prize for *Mary Chestnut's Civil War* and a Bancroft Prize for *The Origins of the New South*. Now, to honor his long and truly distinguished career, Oxford is pleased to publish this special commemorative edition of Woodward's most influential work, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* is one of the great works of Southern history. Indeed, the book actually helped shape that history. Published in 1955, a year after the Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* ordered schools desegregated, *Strange Career* was cited so often to counter arguments for segregation that Martin Luther King, Jr. called it "the historical Bible of the civil rights movement." The book offers a clear and illuminating analysis of the history of Jim Crow laws, presenting evidence that segregation in the South dated only to the 1890s. Woodward convincingly shows that, even under slavery, the two races had not been divided as they were under the Jim Crow laws of the 1890s. In fact, during Reconstruction, there was considerable economic and political mixing of the races. The segregating of the races was a relative newcomer to the region. Hailed as one of the top 100 nonfiction works of the twentieth century, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* has sold almost a million copies and remains, in the words of David Herbert Donald, "a landmark in the history of American race relations."

Book Information

Series: Legal Classics Library

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; Commemorative edition (November 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0195146905

ISBN-13: 978-0195146905

Product Dimensions: 7.7 x 0.7 x 5.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (43 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #64,765 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #118 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Minority Studies](#) #219 in [Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National > African-American & Black](#) #250 in [Books > History > Americas > United States > African Americans > Discrimination & Racism](#)

Customer Reviews

C. Vann Woodward's *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* is not only a fine introduction to its topic -- the segregationist period in the South -- but one of the most significant and influential books of its time. Originally published in 1955 (by Oxford University Press), Professor Woodward's tome kicked off the Civil Rights era with a bang, debunking the ludicrous myth (and mantra among segregationists) that separation of the races had always existed in Southern life, and generally dissecting an ugly monstrosity which had come to be accepted simply as "the way things are." Ten years later, in a second revision which came just as the legal battle against segregation was almost won, Woodward added a wealth of information which helped finish the job of winning the people's hearts and minds: in the words of Robert Penn Warren, Woodward's work was "a witty, learned, and unsettling book. The depth of the unsettling becomes more obvious day by day; which is a way of saying that it is a book of permanent significance." And ten years later still, in this -- the third and final revision -- Woodward capped off the era with an examination of the more violent, less integrationist movements which arose after Watts, with leaders like Huey Newton, Eldridge Cleaver and Bobby Seale. Woodward is an equal-opportunity myth-exploder. On the one hand, he demonstrates at great length that segregation was not a mere expression of racism, but in fact a complex and corrupt outworking of many political and economic interests in the impoverished, post-Reconstruction South.

In C. Vann Woodward's enormously influential examination of Jim Crow segregation laws in the post-Civil War South he makes two fundamental points: first, that the imposition of strict segregation did not immediately follow the War; second, that the eventual adoption of Jim Crow laws was not simply a function of racism--there were myriad political factors involved. Woodward first provides a detailed analysis of the state of the races following the War. He demonstrates: that Slavery had required the proximity and interaction of Blacks and Whites, which could not be reversed overnight; that Northern Republicans, Southern Conservatives and Southern Radicals all had reasons to court black citizens; and reminds us that with the North virtually running the South for a period of years, segregation would not have been allowed immediately after the war. He then makes a compelling case that the true rise of Jim Crow came about, in the 1890's, due to a confluence of factors: 1) Northern withdrawal from Southern affairs; 2) the changes in Northern attitudes towards colored peoples as America became an Imperialist power; 3) the crushing depression of the 80's, which added fuel to racial animus; 4) the concurrent rise of the Populists who were more than willing to play the race card; and 5) the series of Supreme Court rulings which sanctioned separation. Finally, he turns to the demise of segregation, which was going on even as he wrote the several editions of

his book.

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