

Catherine M. Lewis and J. Richard Lewis, *Jim Crow America: A Documentary History*, (Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2009), 234 pp.

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The authors of this book are Catherine M. Lewis and J. Richard Lewis. Mrs. Lewis is an associate professor of history at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Georgia, where she teaches history, the holocaust, sports history, women's studies, and American studies. The co-author, Mr. Lewis, is a former educator, academic administrator, desegregation consultant, and president of JRL Educational Consulting. They are both the authors of other books including, *Don't Ask What I Shot: How Eisenhower's Love of Golf Helped Shape 1950s America*; *The Changing Face of Public History*; and *Race, Politics, and Memory: A Documentary History of the Little Rock School Crisis*.

The authors wrote this book to provide readers primary source materials dating from 1828 to 1980 which expose how the Jim Crow era affected America. The primary purpose of the book is to educate the reader on the genesis of Jim Crow and the struggle to dismantle it. The book provides a collection of primary sources that give background explanations and historical significance to Jim Crow. The authors do not address a specific topic pertaining to Jim Crow; rather, they cover all its aspects, from the perspectives of both victims and the enforcers. They focus on the thoughts and feelings of not only African Americans, but also whites during the period.

Using documents, the book does a great job to show how the Jim Crow era grew as separate institutions and facilities were created to segregate the races. Laws were also passed that made it legal to treat and abuse African Americans at will. The book provides documents to show

the attitudes of many towards Jim Crow as it started to apply everywhere. For example, in one document the writer tried to justify racist actions towards blacks by saying, "African Americans were inferior due to physiological reasons." In another document presented, the author argues that the size of the human brain distinguishes the races. Catherine and Richard Lewis note that despite the fact that these writings were not factual, White segregationists cite and use them to support racial segregation. Presenting such documents shows the difference in status between whites and blacks.

The book shows that African Americans had no choice but, as survival tactic, to endure the obvious racial oppression of Jim Crow. Some of the documents cited such as Cecelia Eggleston, "What a Negro Mother Faces," unmask the true feelings of an African American woman. It is interesting to note that the woman elected not to reproduce because of the fear of what the child would have to go through in life in a racist society.

Catherine and Richard Lewis discuss in details the resistance to Jim Crow. They show that black men, women, and children courageously resisted white supremacy in the South during the era, often risking their very lives. Many of the blacks that were lynched at this time met their fate as a result of their acts of defiance to Jim Crow laws. However, some of the documents analyzed show that there were many African Americans who, instead of being defiant, tried to take a more professional approach to Jim Crow. But as a document such as "Doomed to Destruction," show, they were usually ignored.

The last section in the book examines the multiple ways in which Jim Crow was challenged and eventually dismantled. It illustrates in great details the transition from segregation to integration. It was important for the authors to show that the federal government took an active role in dismantling Jim Crow. They show that during 1937 and 1938, numerous civil rights bills were introduced in Congress. Though racism and segregation were still a factor during the time period, there were leaders who wanted the era to be over. The book cites the document, "Marian Anderson Sings," published in *New York City Amsterdam News* of April 15, 1939 to buttress this point. This was the case of the famous

singer, Marian Anderson, who was denied access to the Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) because she was black. Once the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt, learned of what happened, she resigned her membership of the DAR. With the help of others she secured the Lincoln Memorial for Anderson's performance. Though many southerners condemned her actions, it was a positive note to show that people in power were starting to stand for the rights of African Americans.

Jim Crow America is broken down into five sections: "Inventing," "Building," "Living," "Resisting," and "Dismantling Jim Crow." The authors use in each section primary sources such as legal briefs, cartoons, essays, and letters that provide more in-depth analysis of Jim Crow. The best part of this book is that it includes a number of readings that have never been published. The illustrations and different articles make the book more appealing, spurring the reader to want to investigate the topic more.