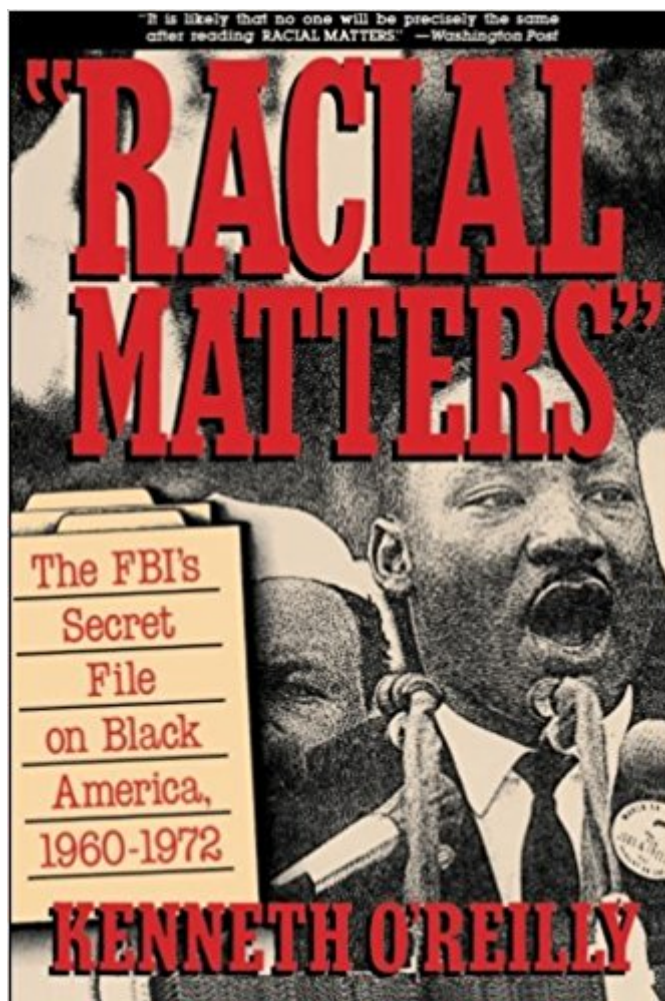


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# Racial Matters: The FBI's Secret File On Black America, 1960-1972



## Synopsis

From Kennedy to Nixon, the FBI unwillingly found itself at the center of the struggle for racial equality and justice. Kenneth O'Reilly tells the shocking story of how political loyalties, priorities, and prejudices turned a government agency into an adversary, instead of a protector, of civil rights.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In thousands of civil rights skirmishes, FBI agents stood by passively as protesters were beaten by Ku Klux Klansmen and segregationists. In this searing expose, O'Reilly ( Hoover and the Un-Americans ) argues persuasively that FBI director J. Edgar Hoover's campaign to destroy the civil rights movement made headway because the Kennedy and Johnson administrations tolerated it. With information from declassified FBI files and other documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, O'Reilly, who teaches at the University of Alaska, demonstrates that the FBI deployed an army of some 7000 "ghetto informants" to spy on black political groups. A zealous FBI campaign helped destroy the Black Panther party; electronic surveillance, break-ins and mail-openings extended to black student groups. Among the 1191 names on the FBI's "Agitator Index" was that of Jesse Jackson, who was subjected to wiretaps and other forms of surveillance. Under Nixon, FBI programs directed against blacks continued, according to O'Reilly. This important book complements Herbert Mitgang's *Dangerous Dossiers*. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This book is essential reading for every American concerned not simply for the vision of a just and equal society, but also about the way the nation's central law enforcement agency, the FBI, set its energy and organizational commitments against the civil rights movement. Driven by his own racism, J. Edgar Hoover turns out, in O'Reilly's account, to be as central a figure in the opposition to the movement as any Klansman. From his earliest days in the Bureau through the events of 1963 and 1964 and after, Hoover waged covert war not simply against Martin Luther King Jr. but all black activists. The book is a powerful, necessary corrective not only to the recent film *Mississippi Burning* but to a generation and more of myth-making about Hoover and his (white) G-men. It is an important addition to civil rights literature.- Henry Steck, SUNY Coll. at CortlandCopyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I'm still reading but this is hidden history and it's not taught in schools. It's so much information and it's just like why would you go through so much trouble to tear down a group of people that just want justice and peace. If oppression is all the U.S. government is for their citizens then America will always be at war, if not with its own people then with other countries. Well do they do say peace, real justice and love aren't money making agendas.

I'm glad I purchased this book!

I'm still reading this one. So far, so good.

This book looks at part of American history that is difficult to delve into -- the FBI's counter-intelligence efforts against the civil rights movement. The FBI didn't just investigate the movement, but launched a secret program to destabilize it. This effort included sending anonymous poison-pen letters to create violence among black-nationalist groups and to break up the marriages of movement leaders. J. Edgar Hoover could not believe black Americans capable of producing a grassroots movement to gain legal rights; they could only be the puppets of a Communist conspiracy directed from abroad. In spite of all this, the book is an even-handed account. The FBI also directed secret campaigns against white-supremacy organizations. No one is spared in this history, including the Kennedy and Johnson administrations; the "good guys" were few and far between, but some of them were working honorably at the FBI. Hoover was also a product of his time, and his FBI operated within the context of American culture and history. Kenneth O'Reilly published the book in 1989 and may not have had the advantage of new material that has come to

light; but more recent histories of the FBI that I've read have neither invalidated nor greatly augmented his conclusions.

Racial Matters was background for my research into the FBI's poor performance in investigations of early civil rights crimes. The introduction & Chapter 1, The Negro Question Origins of a Private War, were the parts of Racial Matters most relevant to my research, and they were great. Kenneth O'Reilly's research, documentation & prose are excellent. The author demonstrates that the FBI never enthusiastically investigated civil rights crimes, and had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the civil rights arena by men like John Doar, Nicolas Katzenbach and Bobby Kennedy. A big reason for the FBI's foot-dragging, the author reveals, was Director Hoover's personal racial, political agenda. In the 1940s, J. Edgar Hoover complained to his boss U.S. Attorney General Tom Clark about the time FBI agents wasted on civil rights murders, lynchings, and assaults, particularly in the South. The performance of FBI agents in the field reflected the Director's attitude. Racial Matters is the best history of the FBI and civil rights that I have read. Highly Recommend.

Great book.

GOOD BOOK

This books details the relationship of The FBI and its director J. Edgar Hoover with Black America. It is clear from reading this book, that the FBI was the enemy. It only supported Civil Rights because of popular opinion. The FBI investigated the Viola Luizzo and Mississippi murders because whites were murdered and a FBI informant was riding in the car with the murderers of Mrs. Luizzo. This book shows how Hoover used his prestige during the 1960's riots to undermine Lyndon Johnson and help elect Richard Nixon. In addition to the character assination of Dr. King, this book details the harassment of the Black movement in general. The operations against The Black Panther Party are also in this book. This book is worth reading.

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