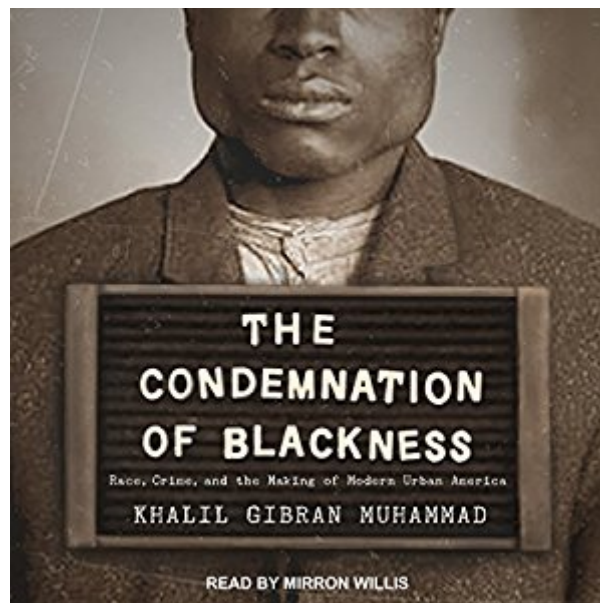




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The Condemnation Of Blackness: Race, Crime, And The Making Of Modern Urban America



Synopsis

Lynch mobs, chain gangs, and popular views of black Southern criminals that defined the Jim Crow South are well known. We know less about the role of the urban North in shaping views of race and crime in American society. Following the 1890 census - the first to measure the generation of African Americans born after slavery - crime statistics, new migration and immigration trends, and symbolic references to America as the promised land of opportunity were woven into a cautionary tale about the exceptional threat black people posed to modern urban society. Excessive arrest rates and overrepresentation in Northern prisons were seen by many whites - liberals and conservatives, Northerners and Southerners - as indisputable proof of blacks' inferiority. In the heyday of "separate but equal", what else but pathology could explain black failure in the "land of opportunity"? The idea of black criminality was crucial to the making of modern urban America, as were African Americans' own ideas about race and crime. Chronicling the emergence of deeply embedded notions of black people as a dangerous race of criminals by explicit contrast to working-class whites and European immigrants, this fascinating book reveals the influence such ideas have had on urban development and social policies.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 12 hours 42 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: Tantor Audio

Audible.com Release Date: August 1, 2017

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B073ZL1ZVB

Best Sellers Rank: #43 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Nonfiction > Law #125 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Sociology > Urban #248 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > History > United States & Canada

Customer Reviews

The Condemnation of Blackness is a painstakingly researched narrative on the formation of social policy in the urban north rooted in a double-standard applied to African-Americans as opposed to immigrants of European descent, which attributed challenges faced by African Americans to their

so-called innate traits to the exclusion of other factors such as employment opportunities, educational disparities and housing segregation rooted in racism. Khalil Muhammad presents a compelling discourse on the historical roots of this policy which appeared to rely more on the racial bias of its progenitors than careful analysis of the other factors contributing to then-named "Negro Problem". Dr. Muhammad's assessment beginning from the 1890 census, the inception of the Progressive Era, through the 1940s, is rooted in factual presentation of the ideas and to a certain extent the biases of the influencers of social policy with respect to African Americans. He highlights the extent to which effort was made to integrate foreign-born immigrants into society while simultaneously excluding black Americans, often rationalizing such behavior by attributing the "waste" in investing resources such as education in African Americans. These same framers of public policy decreed that the challenges of urban life for European immigrants could be addressed through social intervention, placing the blame for rampant crime, unemployment and out of wedlock births on the inherent ills of overcrowded metropolises such as New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia as a result of mass migrations to these population hubs. Interestingly, Professor Muhammad points out the fact that those same conditions existed in large cities in Europe from which the immigrants originated without those similar patterns of migration, though no policy formers took the leap of thought that these immigrants brought these problems with them. Considering the large-scale criminalization of African Americans in northern urban areas, the eventual concentration of white criminal activity in predominantly black areas, the exclusion of black Americans from access to social services and education, it is a testament to strength of character of these individuals who were able to survive (and in subsequent generations thrive) in such an openly hostile environment. The author carefully and accurately links the roots of the current issues urban areas face today, particularly in regards to crime, with the policies set in place in the 19th century. *The Condemnation of Blackness* is a must read for anyone who is interested in the roots of the issue of disproportionately high incarceration rates of African Americans and for those who seek understanding of this issue through the lens of critical analysis of data rather than merely using data to implement flawed decision making. In this sense, *The Condemnation of Blackness* serves as both a sociological study as well as a historical reference.

Purchased for a friend and he enjoyed it!

The truth and nothing but the

A very scholarly work, quite insightful!

Delivered in great condition

I came across this book as a result of a column by Ta-Naheisi Coates. I am a lover of the African American diaspora. I've not been able to make much progress through this book because I spend too much time being awed by statements written by the author. The book's subject makes it a hard read emotionally, but, the book is well written and has tons of references.

A truly eye opening experience. The book delves into America's history of using crime statistics to show proof of black (and these days brown) inferiority without actually looking at the underlying causes of higher crime rates such as racist police practices, heavier sentences for minorities, and of course these days we have the good old drug war which is fought primarily in black and Brown neighborhoods. I am shocked that not much has changed since the early 1900's on this topic. To this day stats are used to justify racist attitudes towards black people.

This book used an impressive amount of research while still managing to use those scattered facts to create a coherent chronology. That effort resulted in a book which breaks down the process by which mass media, in collusion with the so called thinkers of the day, created and maintained the development of a system of white superiority and victim blaming that still exists (albeit in a more subtle form) even today.

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