



A Long Dark Night: Race in America from Jim Crow to World War II

J. Michael Martinez

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For a brief time following the end of the U.S. Civil War, American political leaders had an opportunity—slim, to be sure, but not beyond the realm of possibility—to remake society so that black Americans and other persons of color could enjoy equal opportunity in civil and political life. It was not to be. With each passing year after the war—and especially after Reconstruction ended during the 1870s—American society witnessed the evolution of a new white republic as national leaders abandoned the promise of Reconstruction and justified their racial biases based on political, economic, social, and religious values that supplanted the old North-South/slavery-abolitionist schism of the antebellum era.

A Long Dark Night provides a sweeping history of this too often overlooked period of African American history that followed the collapse of Reconstruction—from the beginnings of legal segregation through the end of World War II. Michael J. Martinez argues that the 1880s ushered in the dark night of the American Negro—a night so dark and so long that the better part of a century would elapse before sunlight broke through. Combining both a “top down” perspective on crucial political issues and public policy decisions as well as a “bottom up” discussion of the lives of black and white Americans between the 1880s and the 1940s, *A Long Dark Night* will be of interest to all readers seeking to better understand this crucial era that continues to resonate throughout American life today.

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