

***Black New Jersey: 1664 to the Present Day*****Graham Russell Gao Hodges****New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019****380 pages****ISBN: 9780813595184****DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14713/njs.v5i1.176>**

*Black New Jersey* is a comprehensive overview of African American history in the state and is an excellent companion volume to the late Clement Alexander Price's pioneering documentary history, *Freedom Not Far Distant: A Documentary History of Afro-Americans in New Jersey* (1980). The study by Professor Hodges is a thoroughly researched inquiry into the history of the black presence in New Jersey from its Anglo-Dutch roots in the seventeenth to the twenty-first century. Utilizing primary sources of the last 350 years, scholarship by other historians of New Jersey's black community, and his own earlier exhaustive scholarship on the black presence in colonial and Revolutionary War New Jersey, Hodges has woven together a complex and nuanced history of blacks in the Garden State.

New Jersey is a state, like so many, characterized by the two central themes of racial prejudice and continuous black resistance to that prejudice. It is not a story peculiar to New Jersey or even the South, but a national narrative woven deeply into the fabric of America. New Jersey was the last northern state in the post-Revolutionary War era of emancipation to begin gradual abolition in 1804 and later rejected the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments providing for national abolition and African American citizenship. Today, as the author noted, New Jersey is one of the most diverse, urbanized, and densely populated states with an expanded black middle-class as well as one of the five most racially segregated states in America.

The first Africans entered the state when New York and New Jersey were occupied by the Dutch and known as the New Netherlands and New Amsterdam. Many of these early black residents were owned by the Dutch West India Company which settled lower Manhattan and North

Jersey in the 1620s. Many were Creoles or people of African origins stolen from Spanish ports and ships by Dutch West India ships. In 1664, the Dutch colony of New Netherlands and the settlement of New Amsterdam fell under English control. African enslavement continued under the English, albeit with more rigid control. By 1726, people of African descent totaled 8 per cent of the colony and labored in farming, skilled trades, and other pursuits. Black resistance in colonial New Jersey was evidenced in the harsh punishments inscribed in the colony's slave code for running away, theft, or rebellion. Hodges ably describes these events of black rebellious conspiracy, agency, and attempts at self-emancipation in New Jersey colonial history. Quaker conversion from slave holding to abolition is explored in detail, which laid the foundation for the gradual abolition act of 1804 with its lucrative compensation for slave owners.

Black desire for freedom was demonstrated in the American Revolution as slaves were willing to join either the patriots or loyalists depending on the most viable offer of freedom from either side. Among the most notable examples were Colonel Tye, the black leader of black and white loyalists raiding along the Jersey coast, and Oliver Cromwell, an enslaved man from Burlington County, who served as a private in the New Jersey Continental Line. Emancipation grew from 4,402 in 1800 to 7,843 by 1810 as a result of service in the Revolutionary War and the Emancipation Act of 1804. By 1830, 90 percent of New Jersey's black population were free, but still over 2,000 people remained enslaved in the state. The Civil War provided another opportunity for military service and emancipation, despite New Jersey Governor Joel Parker and Democratic Party opposition to black enlistment in state regiments. From 2,800 to 3,200 black New Jerseyans enlisted in regiments outside of the state, despite widespread opposition within New Jersey to emancipation and black citizenship.

Hodges explores the rise of both defacto and dejure segregation in local schools, swimming pools, and parks, employment discrimination, residential segregation, and restricted economic opportunities for African Americans in late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century New Jersey. Black participation in World War II spawned the Double V campaign seeking victory over fascism abroad and racism at home. This campaign provided the impetus for a rejuvenated campaign for civil rights culminating in a new state Constitution in 1947 with strong provisions against racial discrimination and demands for increased black political representation at the municipal level and in the New Jersey assembly. The election of black mayors in East Orange, Jersey City, and Newark were some of the gains brought about in the post war period. Hodges explores these developments in detail across the political landscape of New Jersey.

*Black New Jersey* is not a post-racialist narrative of civil rights victory, but rather is a highly nuanced and sophisticated history of the black population in the state. The limitations of African American progress are clearly noted and explored, especially the persistence of racial inequalities in income, unemployment rates, health care, educational results, and incarceration rates. This study is a tale of progress and accomplishments of New Jersey African Americans, but also of racial disparities which negatively affect the quality of life in New Jersey.

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