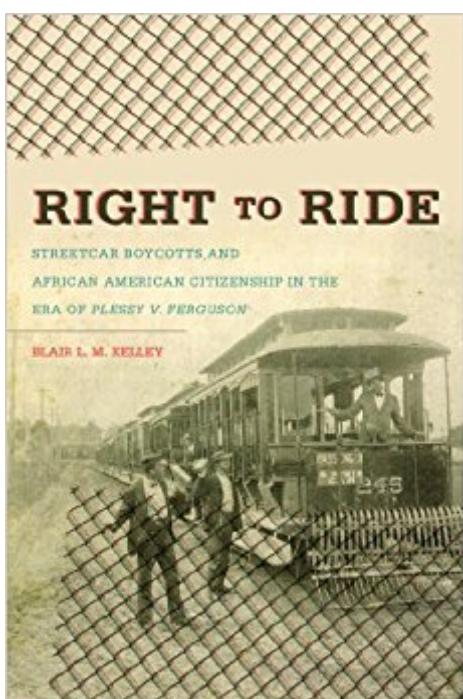


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Right To Ride: Streetcar Boycotts And African American Citizenship In The Era Of Plessy V. Ferguson (The John Hope Franklin Series In African American History And Culture)



Synopsis

Through a reexamination of the earliest struggles against Jim Crow, Blair Kelley exposes the fullness of African American efforts to resist the passage of segregation laws dividing trains and streetcars by race in the early Jim Crow era. Right to Ride chronicles the litigation and local organizing against segregated rails that led to the Plessy v. Ferguson decision in 1896 and the streetcar boycott movement waged in twenty-five southern cities from 1900 to 1907. Kelley tells the stories of the brave but little-known men and women who faced down the violence of lynching and urban race riots to contest segregation. Focusing on three key cities--New Orleans, Richmond, and Savannah--Kelley explores the community organizations that bound protestors together and the divisions of class, gender, and ambition that sometimes drove them apart. The book forces a reassessment of the timelines of the black freedom struggle, revealing that a period once dismissed as the age of accommodation should in fact be characterized as part of a history of protest and resistance.

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Customer Reviews

Excellent --so many important stories in here that needed telling. We should always be skeptical of the notion that dissent ever really dies, I suspect, but Kelley certainly proves that it not only did not die in that era, but also that it wasn't underground. It was public, determined, and - amazing. I think what the book also contributes - and I think these two things are so important - is, first, the outrage and the frustration people felt over having to fight the same battle again and again and again, and second, the impossible positions a tidal wave of white supremacy in the form of segregation placed people in, demanding a basic right on the grounds of justice on the one hand and simultaneously thinking one could prove to whites that one was not a danger by trying to police behavior, clothing, cleanliness of others in the same situation. The title of the final chapter really captures it.

A very thoughtful, compelling, entertaining, enlightening and enjoyable read. Puts a whole new perspective on the so-called "age of accommodation." To find that many events in Professor Kelley's book clarify the findings in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), and to find out that the very laws Martin Luther King, Jr. and others in the Montgomery Improvement Association were arrested under go back to the early 19th century from laws enacted to prevent blacks from lawfully protesting Jim Crow segregation treatment in trains and streetcars was a stunner. Truly a must read for the talented tenth, and others as well.

Professor Blair Kelley is a force to be reckoned with. She has a great understanding of history and she seeks to share it. She is not stuffy; these are stories about people's lives and they are very relevant to understanding how we arrived at our present reality. The book can be read for both pleasure and scholarship and I recommend it to anyone. A must read!

I'm torn between being inspired and depressed. Why does progress have to be so hard? Why does it take so long? Why is cultural backlash often stronger - why does it often last longer - than initial success? Primer for grown-ups who actually want to achieve something. Get ready. Steel yourself. Maybe this is how it will go. And even if you don't succeed, perhaps you can comfort yourself with the idea you created the model for a Martin Luther King Jr. to follow in the future.

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