Harlem - The Four Hundred Year History from Dutch Village to Capital of Black America

Harlem is perhaps the most famous, iconic neighborhood in the United States. A bastion of freedom and the capital of Black America, Harlem's twentieth century renaissance changed our arts, culture, and politics forever. But this is only one of the many chapters in a wonderfully rich and varied history. In Harlem, historian Jonathan Gill presents the first complete chronicle of this remarkable place. From Henry Hudson's first contact with native Harlemites, through Harlem's years as a colonial outpost on the edge of the known world, Gill traces the neighborhood's story, marshaling a tremendous wealth of detail and a host of fascinating figures from George Washington to Langston Hughes. Harlem was an agricultural center under British rule and the site of a key early battle in the Revolutionary War. Later, wealthy elites including Alexander Hamilton built great estates there for entertainment and respite from the epidemics ravaging downtown. In the nineteenth century, transportation urbanized Harlem and brought waves of immigrants from Germany, Italy, Ireland, and elsewhere. Harlem's mix of cultures, extraordinary wealth and extreme poverty was electrifying and explosive. Extensively researched, impressively synthesized, eminently readable, and overflowing with captivating characters, Harlem is an ambitious, sweeping history, and an impressive achievement.

The Roots of Urban Renaissance

In charting the growth of gleaming shopping centers and refurbished brownstones in Harlem, Brian Goldstein shows that gentrification was not imposed on an unwitting community by opportunistic developers or outsiders. It grew from the neighborhood's grassroots, producing a legacy that benefited some longtime residents and threatened others.

The American Negro Theatre and the Long Civil Rights Era

Jonathan Shandell provides the first in-depth study of the historic American Negro Theatre (ANT) and its lasting influence on American popular culture. Founded in 1940 in Harlem, the ANT successfully balanced expressions of African American consciousness with efforts to gain white support for the burgeoning civil rights movement. The theatre company featured innovative productions with emerging artists—Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Ruby Dee, and many others—who would become giants of stage, film, and television. In 1944, the ANT made theatrical history by creating the smash hit Anna Lucasta, the most popular play with an African American cast ever to perform on Broadway. Starting from a shoestring budget, the ANT grew into one of the most important companies in the history of African American theatre. Though the group folded in 1949, it continued to shape American popular culture through the creative work of its many talented artists. Examining oral histories, playbills, scripts, production stills, and
journalistic accounts, Shandell gives us the most complete picture to date of the theatre company by analyzing well-known productions alongside groundbreaking and now-forgotten efforts. Shedding light on this often-overlooked chapter of African American history, which fell between the New Negro Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement, Shandell reveals how the ANT became a valued community institution for Harlem—an important platform for African American artists to speak to racial issues—and a trailblazer in promoting integration and interracial artistic collaboration in the U.S. In doing so, Shandell also demonstrates how a small amateur ensemble of the 1940s succeeded in challenging, expanding, and transforming how African Americans were portrayed in the ensuing decades. The result is a fascinating and entertaining examination that will be of interest to scholars and students of African American and American studies and theatre history, as well as popular culture enthusiasts.

The Fire Is Upon Us - James Baldwin, William F. Buckley Jr., and the Debate Over Race in America

"In February 1965, novelist and 'poet of the Black Freedom Struggle' James Baldwin and political commentator and father of the modern American conservative movement William F. Buckley met in Cambridge Union to face-off in a televised debate. The topic was 'The American Dream is at the expense of the American Negro.' Buccola uses this momentous encounter as a lens through which to deepen our understanding of two of the most important public intellectuals in twentieth century American thought. The book begins by providing intellectual biographies of each debater. As Buckley reflected on the civil rights movement, he did so from the perspective of someone who thought the dominant norms and institutions in the United States were working quite well for most people and that they would eventually work well for African-Americans. From such a perspective, any ideology, personality, or movement that seems to threaten those dominant norms and institutions must be deemed a threat. Baldwin could not bring himself to adopt such a bird's eye point of view. Instead, he focused on the 'inner lives' of those involved on all sides of the struggle. Imagine what it must be like, he told the audience at Cambridge, to have the sense that your country has not 'pledged its allegiance to you?' Buccola weaves the intellectual biographies of these two larger-than-life personalities and their fabled debate with the dramatic history of the civil rights movement that includes a supporting cast of such figures as Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, Lorraine Hansberry, and George Wallace. Buccola shows that the subject of their debate continues to have resonance in our own time as the social mobility of blacks remains limited and racial inequality persists"--

All the Nations Under Heaven - Immigrants, Migrants, and the Making of New York, Revised Edition

First published in 1996, All the Nations Under Heaven has earned praise and a wide readership for its unparalleled chronicle of the role of immigrants and migrants in shaping the history and culture of New York City. This updated edition of a classic text brings the story of the immigrant experience in New York City up to the present with vital new material on the city's revival as a global metropolis with deeply rooted racial and economic inequalities. All the Nations Under Heaven explores New York City's history through the stories of people who moved there from
countless places of origin and indelibly marked its hybrid popular culture, its contentious ethnic politics, and its relentlessly dynamic economy. From Dutch settlement to the extraordinary diversity of today’s immigrants, the book chronicles successive waves of Irish, German, Jewish, and Italian immigrants and African American and Puerto Rican migrants, showing how immigration changes immigrants and immigrants change the city. In a compelling narrative synthesis, All the Nations Under Heaven considers the ongoing tensions between inclusion and exclusion, the pursuit of justice and the reality of inequality, and the evolving significance of race and ethnicity. In an era when immigration, inequality, and globalization are bitterly debated, this revised edition is a timely portrait of New York City through the lenses of migration and immigration.

**Urban Lowlands - A History of Neighborhoods, Poverty, and Planning**

In Urban Lowlands, Steven T. Moga looks closely at the Harlem Flats in New York City, Black Bottom in Nashville, Swede Hollow in Saint Paul, and the Flats in Los Angeles, to interrogate the connections between a city’s actual landscape and the poverty and social problems that are often concentrated at its literal lowest points. Taking an interdisciplinary perspective on the history of US urban development from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, Moga reveals patterns of inequitable land use, economic dispossession, and social discrimination against immigrants and minorities. In attending to the landscapes of neighborhoods typically considered slums, Moga shows how physical and policy-driven containment has shaped the lives of the urban poor, while wealth and access to resources have been historically concentrated in elevated areas—truly “the heights.” Moga’s innovative framework expands our understanding of how planning and economic segregation alike have molded the American city.

**Race Capital? - Harlem as Setting and Symbol**

For close to a century, Harlem has been the iconic black neighborhood widely seen as the heart of African American life and culture, both celebrated as the vanguard of black self-determination and lamented as the face of segregation. But with Harlem’s demographic, physical, and commercial landscapes rapidly changing, the neighborhood’s status as a setting and symbol of black political and cultural life looks uncertain. As debate swirls around Harlem’s present and future, Race Capital? revisits a century of the area’s history, culture, and imagery, exploring how and why it achieved its distinctiveness and significance and offering new accounts of Harlem’s evolving symbolic power. In this book, leading scholars consider crucial aspects of Harlem’s social, political, and intellectual history; its artistic, cultural, and economic life; and its representation across an array of media and genres. Together they reveal a community at once local and transnational, coalescing and conflicted; one that articulated new visions of a cosmopolitan black modernity while clashing over distinctions of ethnicity, gender, class, and sexuality. Topics explored include Harlem as a literary phenomenon; recent critiques of Harlem exceptionalism; gambling and black business history; the neighborhood’s transnational character; its importance in the black freedom struggle; black queer spaces; and public policy and neighborhood change in historical context. Spanning a century, from the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance to present-day controversies over gentrification, Race Capital? models new Harlem scholarship that interrogates exceptionalism while taking seriously the importance
of place and locality, offering vistas onto new directions for African American and diasporic studies.

**The Artistic Activism of Elombe Brath**

In 1963, at the height of the southern civil rights movement, Cecil Brathwaite (1936–2014), under the pseudonym Cecil Elombe Brath, published a satire of Black leaders entitled Color Us Cullud! The American Negro Leadership Official Coloring Book. The book pillories a variety of Black leaders—from political figures like Adam Clayton Powell and Whitney Young to civil rights activists like Martin Luther King, Bayard Rustin, and John Lewis, and even entertainers like Sammy Davis Jr., Lena Horne, and Dick Gregory—critiquing the inauthenticity of movement leaders while urging a more radical approach to Black activism. Despite the strong illustrations and unique commentary presented in the coloring book, it has virtually disappeared from histories of the movement. The Artistic Activism of Elombe Brath restores the coloring book and its creator to a place of prominence in the historiography of the Black left. It begins with an analysis of Brath’s influences, describing his life and work including his development as a Black nationalist thinker and Black satirist. This volume includes Brath’s early works—illustrations for DownBeat magazine and Beat Jokes, Bop Humor, & Cool Cartoons—as well as the full run of his comic strip “Congressman Carter and Beat Nick Jackson” from the New York Citizen-Call and a complete edition of Color Us Cullud! itself. These illustrations are followed by annotations that frame and contextualize each of the coloring book’s entries. The book closes with selections from Brath’s art and political thinking via archival material and samples of his written work. Ultimately, this volume captures and restores a unique perspective on the civil rights movement often omitted from the historiography but vital to understanding its full scope.

**Langston's Salvation - American Religion and the Bard of Harlem**

Winner of the 2018 Award for Excellence in the Study of Religion in Textual Studies, presented by the American Academy of Religion A new perspective on the role of religion in the work of Langston Hughes Langston's Salvation offers a fascinating exploration into the religious thought of Langston Hughes. Known for his poetry, plays, and social activism, the importance of religion in Hughes’ work has historically been ignored or dismissed. This book puts this aspect of Hughes work front and center, placing it into the wider context of twentieth-century American and African American religious cultures. Best brings to life the religious orientation of Hughes work, illuminating how this powerful figure helped to expand the definition of African American religion during this time. Best argues that contrary to popular perception, Hughes was neither an avowed atheist nor unconcerned with religious matters. He demonstrates that Hughes' religious writing helps to situate him and other black writers as important participants in a broader national discussion about race and religion in America. Through a rigorous analysis that includes attention to Hughes’s unpublished religious poems, Langston’s Salvation reveals new insights into Hughes’s body of work, and demonstrates that while Hughes is seen as one of the most important voices of the Harlem Renaissance, his writing also needs to be understood within the context of twentieth-century American religious liberalism and of the larger modernist movement. Combining historical and literary analyses with biographical explorations of Langston Hughes as a writer and individual, Langston’s Salvation opens a space to read...
Langston Hughes’ writing religiously, in order to fully understand the writer and the world he
inhabited.

**Philip Payton - The Father of Black Harlem**

At the turn of the early twentieth century, Harlem—the iconic Black neighborhood—was
predominantly white. The Black real estate entrepreneur Philip Payton played a central role in
Harlem’s transformation. He founded the Afro-American Realty Company in 1903, vowing to
vanquish housing discrimination. Yet this ambitious mission faltered as Payton faced the
constraints of white capitalist power structures. In this biography, Kevin McGruder explores
Payton’s career and its implications for the history of residential segregation. Payton stood up
for the right of Black people to live in Harlem in the face of vocal white resistance. Through
skillful use of print media, he branded Harlem as a Black community and attracted interest from
those interested in racial uplift. Yet while Payton “opened” Harlem streets, his business model
depended on continued racial segregation. Like white real estate investors, he benefited from
the lack of housing options available to desperate Black tenants by charging higher rents.
Payton developed a specialty in renting all-Black buildings, rather than the integrated buildings
he had once envisioned, and his personal successes ultimately entrenched Manhattan’s racial
boundaries. McGruder highlights what Payton’s story shows about the limits of seeking
advancement through enterprise in a capitalist system deeply implicated in racial inequality. At a
time when understanding the roots of residential segregation has become increasingly urgent,
this biography sheds new light on the man and the forces that shaped Harlem.

**Movie Reviews**

This rousing documentary follows the reporters of India’s only all-women news outlet as they pivot to digital
journalism while battling personal and political challenges. By Devika Girish In his ...