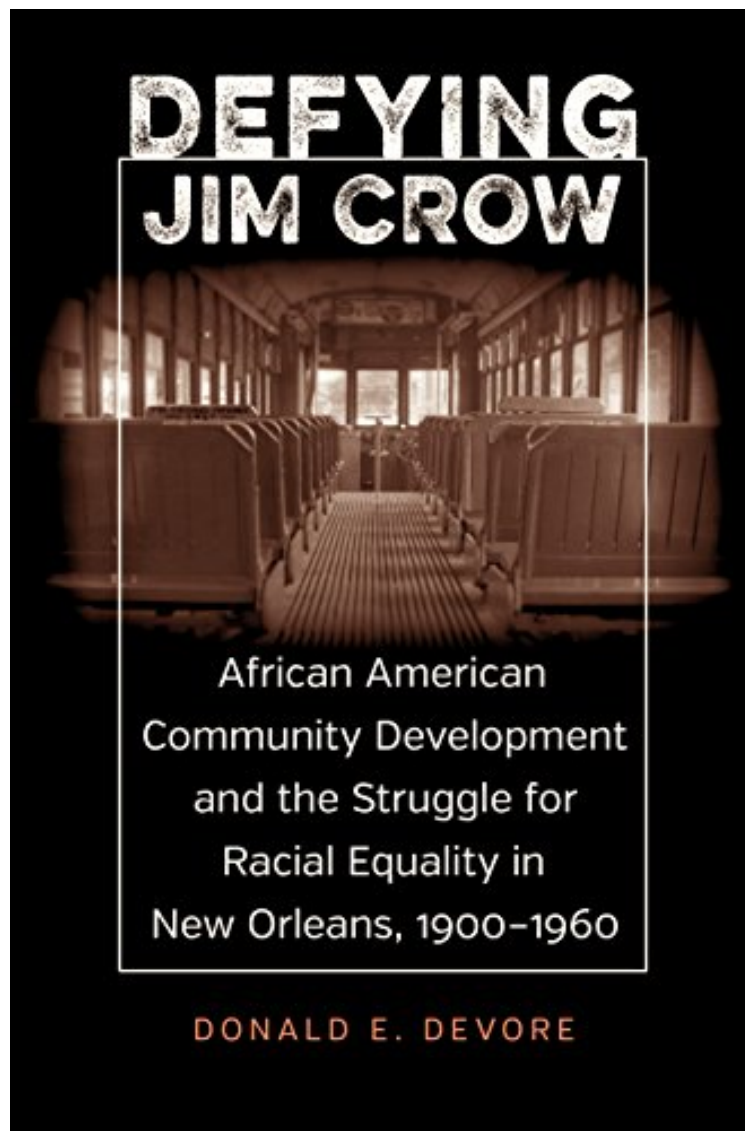


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## **Defying Jim Crow: African American Community Development and the Struggle for Racial Equality in New Orleans, 1900-1960 (Voices of the South)**

*Donald E. DeVore*

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy orlandez PierreThis is a must read0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The Struggle for racial equality in New Orleans, a must readBy Timothy E. MasseyNew Orleans has always been a town not known for its racism. At the outbreak of the Civil War an all-Black Confederate unit, called the New Orleans Guard was organized. New Orleans like most Southern states had been more inclusive of its free Black population than in the north. As reconstruction faded and the old governments' settled back into power, the Jim Crow laws began to take effect. In some areas this was more of a retaliation measure; however, it did reflect long understood policies in the more racist north.Blacks in New Orleans felt these laws designed to relegate them to second class citizenship, was neither legitimate nor permanent. They had been an initial part of the community that was mostly color blind before the war. With Union occupation and they saw their rights slowly eroded away as free men of color and former slaves were for the first time cast into the same lot.*Defying Jim Crow* tells the story of this community's decades-long struggle against segregation, disenfranchisement, and racial violence. It tells of their struggle to return to the rights, at least enjoyed by free Blacks before the war. While exclusion and violence mounted in the years that followed they held on to the belief that all men are created equal and that they too would see the trends of oppression reversed. They sought the end, by remaining a tight knit and politically energized community. They had one weapon they had not had, and that was the right to vote, they could invest in education, join national organizations, and support their own communities Black businesses. Activists worked within the framework of the laws dealt them to bring understanding to the community and to cast a foundation that brought challenges to, and change to a racist law system. This framework proved to be a model in a city full of diversity and ethnicity. Though race relations and insightful community building, New Orleans overcame the had dealt them, and is still a model in the American struggle for freedom.

From the earliest days of Jim Crow, African Americans in New Orleans rallied around the belief that the new system of racially biased laws, designed to relegate them to second-class citizenship, was neither legitimate nor permanent. Drawing on shared memories of fluid race relations and post-Civil War political participation, they remained committed to a disciplined and sustained pursuit of equality. *Defying Jim Crow* tells the story of this community's decades-long struggle against segregation, disenfranchisement, and racial violence. Amid mounting violence and increasing exclusion, black New Orleanians believed their best defense depended upon maintaining a close-knit and politically engaged community. Donald E. DeVore's peerless research shows how African Americans sought to reverse the trends of oppression by prioritizing the kind of capacity building-investment in education, participation in national organizations, and a spirit of entrepreneurship in markets not dominated by white businessmen-that would ensure the community's ability to keep fighting for their rights in the face of setbacks and hostility from the city's white leaders. As some black activists worked to attain equity within the "separate but equal" framework, they provided a firm foundation and crucial support for more overt challenges to the racist government structures. The result of over a decade's research into the history of civil rights and community building in New Orleans, *Defying Jim Crow* provides a thorough and insightful analysis of race relations in one of America's most diverse cities and offers a vital contribution to the complex history of the African American struggle for freedom.

"A penetrating look at local actions that allowed the later developments so widely known. . . . Highly recommended. All levels/libraries."--CHOICE  
"In this thorough, thoughtful, and elegantly written book, Donald E. DeVore . . . offers a successful model for other historians interested in chronicling the longue duree history of social movements. . . . This reviewer gives DeVore's work a hearty recommendation to anyone who is interested in the long civil rights movement, urban history, or the history of New Orleans."--American Historical "[A] breathtaking study. . . . DeVore's carefully researched case studies of community resistance introduces readers to a number of overlooked or forgotten champions of racial equality in New Orleans, and serves as a wonderful introduction to the time period." --Southeastern Librarian  
About the Author  
Donald E. DeVore is an associate professor of history at the University of South Alabama. He is the co-author of *Crescent City Schools: Public Education in New Orleans, 1841-1991*.