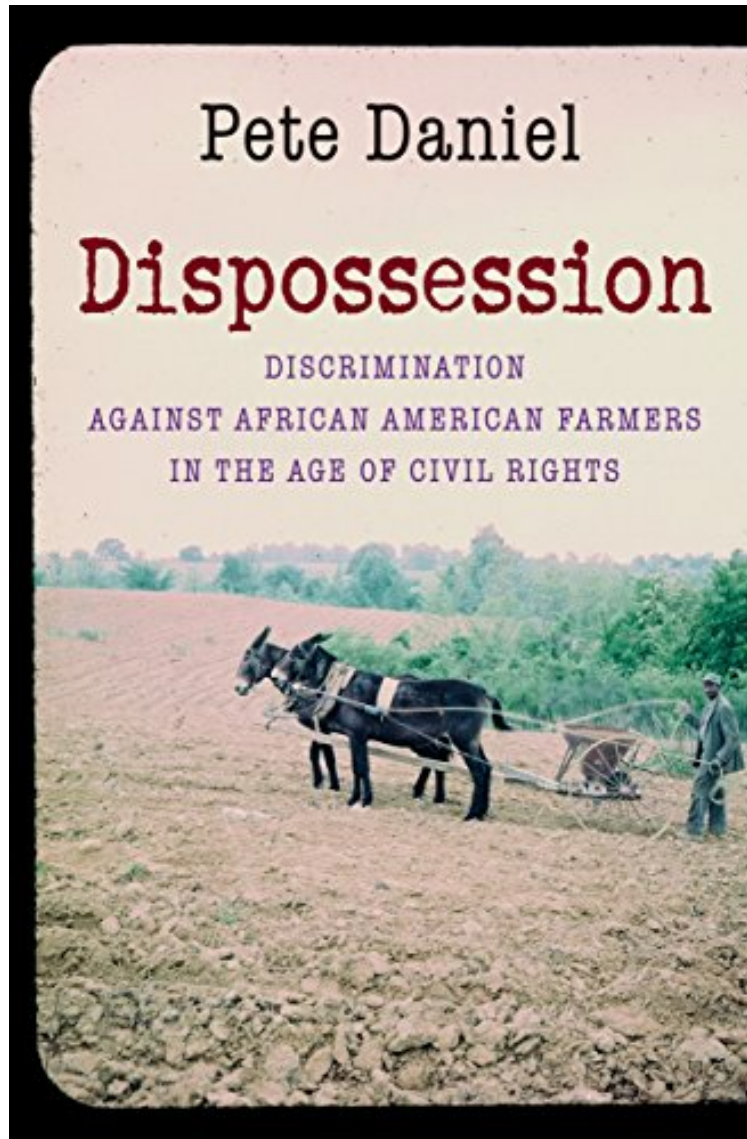


(Download) Dispossession: Discrimination against African American Farmers in the Age of Civil Rights

Dispossession: Discrimination against African American Farmers in the Age of Civil Rights

Pete Daniel

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Pete Daniel : Dispossession: Discrimination against African American Farmers in the Age of Civil Rights
before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dispossession:
Discrimination against African American Farmers in the Age of Civil Rights:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Terrific work about USDA discrimination and government

backlash against black farmers during the civil rights movement

By Jesse S. Hall

In *Dispossession*, Pete Daniel expertly demonstrates policies, acts, and intent of discrimination by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) against black farmers throughout the twentieth-century South. Daniel frames this narrative within the traditional civil rights era and through the actions of three USDA agencies: the Farmers Home Administration (FHA), the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS), and the Federal Extension Service (FES). *Dispossession* makes two significant claims as the narrative bisects agricultural and civil rights history. First, the decline of black farmers was the result of USDA discrimination and not solely the consequence of agricultural industrialization. Daniel rejects a technologically deterministic story, in favor of USDA agency. He does situate USDA discrimination within the technological and scientific agricultural revolution of the twentieth century, with advancements in mechanized harvesting, synthetic pesticides, and fertilizer, but human action remains paramount in the narrative. Despite the shared challenges of all small farm owners, Daniel establishes that no segment of the rural population suffered more at the hands of the USDA than African American farmers in the South. The decline of African American farmers lay in systematic discrimination by refusing loans, withholding agricultural information, and financially ruining successful black farmers. Amidst this agricultural revolution and USDA discrimination, however, Daniel offers a second argument that provides a nuanced version of a civil rights narrative. He argues that not only did African Americans suffer discrimination by the USDA, but that discrimination against black farmers actually increased after civil rights landmark events like the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision and the Civil Rights Acts of 1957 and 1964. Such a counterintuitive claim forces the reader to rethink the idea of “progress” and the underlying assumption that legislation and legal verdicts automatically equate to progress and lessened discrimination. Symbolic victories do not necessarily beget practical progress in the lives of the discriminated. The significance of Daniel’s argument is that it shatters the foundation of so many triumphal narratives about the civil rights era. On the surface, the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s appear as decades of social progress and justice, but Daniel’s story begs the question that if we hold the microscope to other organizations, agencies, and officials, what would progress look like? The USDA deftly played a game of “smoke and mirrors” (135-136) that gave the illusion of compliance and progress. After reading Daniel’s *Dispossession*, one cannot help think that other bureaucratic agents of the Civil Rights Movement may have acted out a similar charade. *Dispossession* challenges historical assumptions and forces readers to rethink government policy and action in the post-Civil Rights Movement world. Daniel’s deft use of sources and memory, coupled with a well-written narrative and grounding in physical space, deliver a work that demonstrates the historical roots of suffering and discrimination at the hands of the USDA. This book is well worth the time and money, I would highly suggest it for anyone interested in civil rights history, agricultural history, or issues of environmental justice.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars

By d b good

Between 1940 and 1974, the number of African American farmers fell from 681,790 to just 45,594--a drop of 93 percent. In his hard-hitting book, historian Pete Daniel analyzes this decline and chronicles black farmers' fierce struggles to remain on the land in the face of discrimination by bureaucrats in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. He exposes the shameful fact that at the very moment civil rights laws promised to end discrimination, hundreds of thousands of black farmers lost their hold on the land as they were denied loans, information, and access to the programs essential to survival in a capital-intensive farm structure. More than a matter of neglect of these farmers and their rights, this "passive nullification" consisted of a blizzard of bureaucratic obfuscation, blatant acts of discrimination and cronyism, violence, and intimidation. *Dispossession* recovers a lost chapter of the black experience in the American South, presenting a counternarrative to the conventional story of the progress achieved by the civil rights movement.

The critical exposure of discrimination at all levels of government is both informative and provocative and is a welcome addition to the historiographical conversation.--H-1960s

An essential contribution to the rural history of the civil rights movement and to the growing history of black farm ownership.--Register of the Kentucky Historical Society

Well-written and impeccably researched . . . [and] an invaluable and welcomed addition to the ever-expanding landscape of Civil Rights historiography.--Journal of the North Carolina Association of Historians

Read *Dispossession*. It's a riveting and timely account of the deleterious legacy of slavery. And despite the national interest in civil rights, not much competes with *Dispossession*.--Huffington Post

Soberingly revealing the dark underside of an era hailed for black success against racism, Daniel's work exposes sickening, irreparable, racist destruction that compels reconception of popular memories of a generation of civil rights victories. This book belongs in any serious collection on U.S. civil rights, federal farm policy, or 20th-century America.--Library Journal

Daniel tells a fascinating, in many ways surprising, but completely infuriating story. His archival research is creative and impeccable.--Law and History

Likely to stimulate renewed scholarly interest in 20th-century agricultural history, this fine book belongs in every academic library. Highly recommended. All levels/libraries.--Choice

This thoroughly researched and clearly written account of USDA discrimination against black farmers merits reading by anyone interested in agricultural and southern history.--American Historical

Southern farmers struggled to keep up with changes in technology and policy,

economics and politics, labor relations and out-migration. African American farmers bore the additional burden of crippling discrimination. . . . With customary passion, Pete Daniel methodically demonstrates that the USDA bears much of the blame. Dispossession catalogs decades of locally administered and federally sanctioned racism that permeated this powerful government agency's activities within the South.--North Carolina Historical Daniel's Dispossession is provocative, beautifully crafted, and a fitting continuation of his tremendous contribution to our understanding of the fundamental changes in the United States' agricultural systems during the twentieth century.--Journal of American History Daniel's rich description of the people and processes that blocked black farmers' access to the resources they needed to stay on the land is an essential guide for scholars seeking to understand post-1960s developments and persistent racial inequality in the twenty-first century.--Journal of Southern History A rich, compelling, and important book. No one chronicles the way government and the advocates of scientific agriculture have changed the rural culture of the South better than Pete Daniel.--Anthony J. Badger, Cambridge University In this intense and insightful book, Pete Daniel exposes the institutional racism at work in all agencies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, while chronicling the struggles of the black farmers 'who stubbornly refused to go quietly from their farms.' Expanding the boundaries of the civil rights movement, Dispossession is a powerful and important contribution to the historiography of the black freedom struggle.--John Dittmer, author of Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi Daniel's book documents the countless discriminatory practices of the USDA, which unrelentingly undermined Afro-American farmers' ability to succeed. He tells of the personal agony experienced by both Afro-American farmers and Afro-American employees of the USDA. The book exposes how USDA bureaucrats stripped Afro-Americans not only of their rights, but also, arguably, of their citizenship.--Timothy C. Pigford, lead plaintiff, Pigford v. Glickman About the Author Pete Daniel has been both a professor of history and a public historian. He has served as president of the Southern Historical Association and the Organization of American Historians, and he currently lives in Washington, D.C. This is his seventh book.