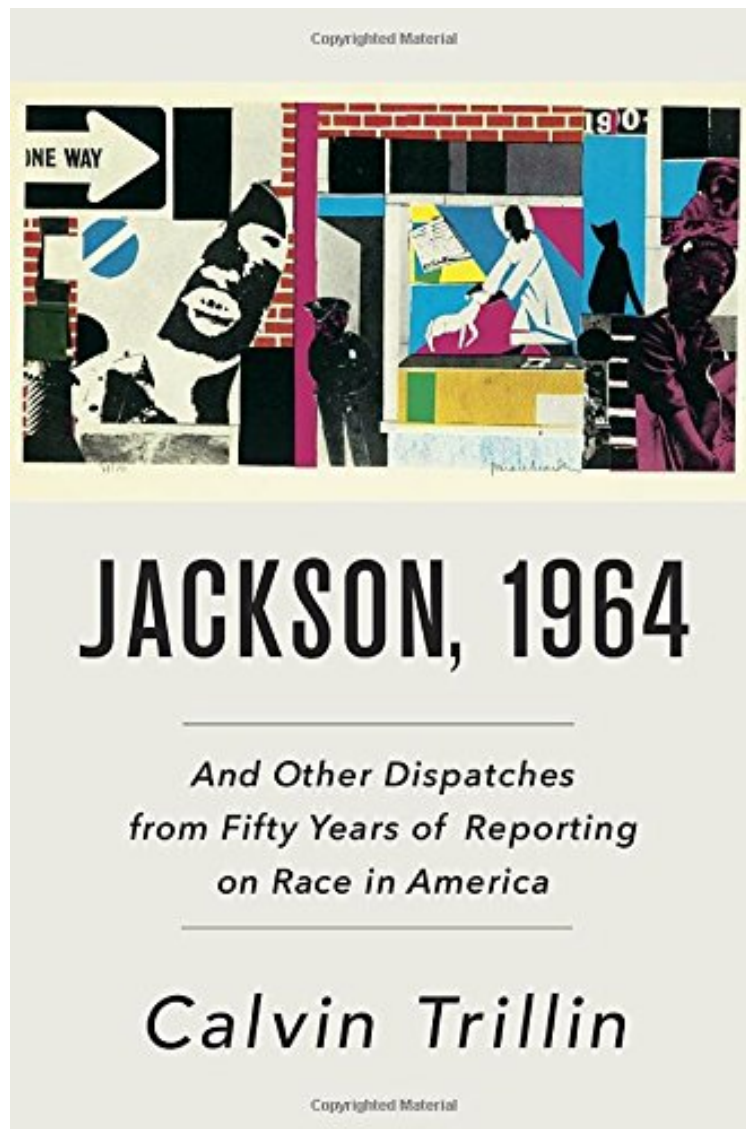


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# Jackson, 1964: And Other Dispatches from Fifty Years of Reporting on Race in America

Calvin Trillin

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#516399 in Books Calvin Trillin 2016-06-28 2016-06-28 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x 1.00 x 5.70l, .96 #File Name: 0399588248304 pages Jackson 1964 And Other Dispatches from Fifty Years of Reporting on Race in America | File size: 39.Mb

Calvin Trillin : Jackson, 1964: And Other Dispatches from Fifty Years of Reporting on Race in America before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Jackson, 1964: And Other Dispatches from Fifty Years of Reporting on Race in America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Historical Chronicles on Race in America By Gari Rae Most of the stories have many actors, which can get confusing, and somewhat tedious to keep track of. That said, the book is so worthwhile for its historical perspective. Trillin doesn't focus on the well-known racial incidents and efforts, but the small-town incidents and regional government practices that were just normal and shockingly pervasive. Regarding race, America has made great progress in some areas, and abysmal progress in others. Add the current breadth of America's "otherism" based on ethnicity, religion, sexual identity, and race, and one can leave the book either cynical or hopeful. It's up to the reader. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. How far we have and have not come By Ruth W. Messenger A brilliant compendium of Trillin's articles about issues of race over the last 50 years, many but not all on events in the south. Each article ends with an update as to what has happened since. It is often like rubbing necessary salt in a wound to remember how terrifyingly divided and antagonistic groups were, how fiercely state power was used against progress, how some things are better and many are not. All written by one of the most distinguished commentators on our times 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Still topical today, timeless histories of civil rights. By T. O'Rourke I love Calvin Trillin, from his humorous pieces (and memorably hilarious talk show appearances) to his hard core journalism. His tone is one of a kind, a mix of incredulousness and matter of factness, and it conveys as much information it doesn't say as it says. This collection is a good companion piece to the recent release of another inimitable writer, Charles Portis's writings on the civil rights movement. Trillin does not document the violence and the excitement of the moment as Portis did, but the behind the scenes (wink) and less obvious goings on that have as much, if not more, impact. You can feel his contempt for the self-righteous racists, and his sympathy for the oppressed and unjustly treated, but it doesn't change the objective reality. You can't be "fair and balanced" when you are writing about events like these; you have to try to tell the truth. I read this one first and will tackle his humorous essays soon.

From bestselling author and beloved New Yorker writer Calvin Trillin, a deeply resonant, career-spanning collection of articles on race and racism, from the 1960s to the present In the early sixties, Calvin Trillin got his start as a journalist covering the Civil Rights Movement in the South. Over the next five decades of reporting, he often returned to scenes of racial tension. Now, for the first time, the best of Trillin's pieces on race in America have been collected in one volume. In the title essay of Jackson, 1964, we experience Trillin's riveting coverage of the pathbreaking voter registration drive known as the Mississippi Summer Project—coverage that includes an unforgettable airplane conversation between Martin Luther King, Jr., and a young white man sitting across the aisle. ("I'd like to be loved by everyone," King tells him, "but we can't always wait for love.") In the years that follow, Trillin rides along with the National Guard units assigned to patrol black neighborhoods in Wilmington, Delaware; reports on the case of a black homeowner accused of manslaughter in the death of a white teenager in an overwhelmingly white Long Island suburb; and chronicles the remarkable fortunes of the Zulu Social Aid Pleasure Club, a black carnival krewa in New Orleans whose members parade on Mardi Gras in blackface. He takes on issues that are as relevant today as they were when he wrote about them. Excessive sentencing is examined in a 1970 piece about a black militant in Houston serving thirty years in prison for giving away one marijuana cigarette. The role of race in the use of deadly force by police is highlighted in a 1975 article about an African American shot by a white policeman in Seattle. Uniting all these pieces are Trillin's unflinching eye and graceful prose. Jackson, 1964 is an indispensable account of a half-century of race and racism in America, through the lens of a master journalist and writer who was there to bear witness. Praise for Jackson, 1964 "Trillin's elegant storytelling and keen observations sometimes churned my wrath about the glacial pace of progress. That's because to me and millions of African-Americans, the topics of race and poverty—and their adverse impact on the mind and spirit—are, as Trillin acknowledges, not theoretical; they're personal."—Dorothy Butler Gilliam, *The New York Times Book Review* (Editor's Choice) "These pieces . . . will continue to be read for the pleasure they deliver as well as for the pain they describe."—*The New York Times* "With the diligent clarity, humane wit, polished prose and attention to pertinent detail that exemplify Trillin's journalism at its best . . . Jackson, 1964 drives home a sobering realization: Even with signs of progress, racism in America is news that stays news."—*USA Today* "These unsettling tales, elegantly written and wonderfully reported, are like black-and-white snapshots from the national photo album. They depict a society in flux but also stubbornly unmoved through the decades when it comes to many aspects of race relations. . . . The grace Trillin brings to his job makes his stories all the more poignant."—*The Christian Science Monitor* "An exceptional collection [from] master essayist Trillin."—Booklist (starred review)

"When essays about race in America, written over a space of five decades, are as relevant today as the earliest one was a half-century ago, we gain new insight into how much real progress this country has—or has not—made. . . . This book provides historical context to the issues of race, racism, voter suppression and income inequality underpinning the current presidential election. Trillin's elegant storytelling and keen observations sometimes churned my wrath about the glacial pace of progress. That's because to me and millions of African-Americans, the topics of race and poverty—and their adverse impact on the mind and spirit—are, as Trillin acknowledges, not theoretical; they're personal."—Dorothy Butler Gilliam, *The New York Times Book Review* (Editor's Choice) "Everything in Jackson, 1964

resonates. . . . The volume is more than a history lesson. The issues it considers—police shootings, voter suppression tactics, race-based acts of terrorism—seem taken from today’s headlines. . . . [It’s] a memorial of sorts. It contains the names of many forgotten figures in the civil rights struggle. The biggest honor Mr. Trillin paid these men and women was to write about them so honestly and so well. These pieces have literary as well as historical merit, and they will continue to be read for the pleasure they deliver as well as for the pain they describe.”—Dwight Garner, *The New York Times* “With the diligent clarity, humane wit, polished prose and attention to pertinent detail that exemplify Trillin’s journalism at its best . . . Jackson, 1964 drives home a sobering realization: Even with signs of progress, racism in America is news that stays news.”—USA Today “These unsettling tales, elegantly written and wonderfully reported, are like black-and-white snapshots from the national photo album. They depict a society in flux but also stubbornly unmoved through the decades when it comes to many aspects of race relations. . . . The grace Trillin brings to his job makes his stories all the more poignant.”—*The Christian Science Monitor* “Modern and urgent. Essay after essay reminds us that the history of this struggle consists of events that easily could happen today.”—*Minneapolis StarTribune* “‘History is just people,’ Edna Ferber once wrote, and it ‘isn’t only yesterday. It’s today. There is no history without people, any more than there is sound without hearing.’ . . . Luckily, Jackson, 1964 is a welcome reminder that critical thinkers like Trillin have spent years of their lives listening.”—*Atlanta Journal-Constitution* “A tapestry of racial combat from the spiteful to the covert and everything in between . . . Jackson, 1964 is disciplined writing pretty well at its best.”—*Winnipeg Free Press* “The highly readable stories remain topical today. And taken as a whole, [Jackson, 1964] is a reminder of how graceful and seemingly effortless [Trillin’s] prose is. [He] has perfected the technique of exploring broad societal issues while training a close lens on a narrow yet compelling subject.”—*Jewish Telegraphic Agency* “Calvin Trillin’s fifty years of writing about race in the U.S. is as historic as a lunch counter sit-in and as current as today’s tweets.”—*Shelf Awareness* “An exceptional collection [from] master essayist [Calvin] Trillin . . . exposing through perceptive observations and nuanced humor the insidious nature of discriminatory practices.”—*Booklist* (starred review) “Trillin, a regular contributor to the *New Yorker* since 1963, collects his insights and musings on race in America in previously published essays from over fifty years of reporting. . . . What’s shocking is how topical and relatively undated many of these essays seem today.”—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review) “The author of some thirty titles, Trillin revisits the last half-century’s racial struggles in various regions of the country, and readers are likely to come away thinking, ‘so much has not really changed all that much.’ . . . Haunting pieces that show how our window on the past is often a mirror.”—*Kirkus*

**About the Author** Calvin Trillin has been a staff writer at *The New Yorker* since 1963, when the magazine published “An Education in Georgia,” his account of the desegregation of the University of Georgia. He is the author of thirty books. His nonfiction includes *About Alice*, *Remembering Denny*, and *Killings*. His humor writing includes books of political verse, comic novels, books on eating, and the collection *Quite Enough* of Calvin Trillin. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

**Jackson, 1964** Jackson, Mississippi 1964 To people who happen to be admirers of Spanish Civil War literature, Jackson as the headquarters of the Mississippi Summer Project is likely to conjure up visions of Madrid as the capital of the Spanish Loyalists. Physically, Jackson could hardly look less like Madrid, but the Summer Project—a statewide program of voter registration and other civil rights activities being carried out by some six hundred volunteers and some one hundred paid workers—is so thoroughly caught up in a tangle of frenetic planning and propagandizing that a reader of George Orwell and Ernest Hemingway half expects to come across military strategists mapping out campaigns against mountain villages or to see clusters of ideologists arguing and plotting in small, dark bars, their conversations occasionally interrupted by a stray bomb. One difference, of course, is that the Council of Federated Organizations, or COFO—the amalgam of civil rights groups that runs the Summer Project—does not actually control even the part of Jackson where it is permitted to exist, and there are constant reminders of who does. A number of editorialists and columnists on the Jackson daily newspapers are not merely segregationists but segregationists of the type who are inclined to indicate their position by referring to Martin Luther King, Jr., as “the Rev. Dr. Extremist Agitator Martin Luther King, Jr.,” or by suggesting that President Johnson’s theme song should be “The High Yellow Rose of Texas,” or by telling cannibal jokes; the community bulletin board of a local radio station occasionally includes, among reports of rummage sales and church suppers, the announcement that Americans for the Preservation of the White Race will hold its weekly meeting that evening and “all interested white people are invited to attend”; the chatty gray-haired lady in charge of a local bookstore, whose inventory appears to begin with the writings of the John Birch Society and move to the right, is available for political arguments with the civil rights workers she refers to amiably as “those COFO things”; one can telephone Dial for Truth, a recorded announcement by the Jackson Citizens’ Council of the evils that race-mixing has brought upon the world during the previous week; and the Mississippi Numismatic Exchange, Inc., has a sign in its window reading, Kennedy half dollars 25¢. that’s all we think they’re worth! (The sign says in smaller letters that the case that goes along with one costs fifty cents.) Still, Jackson, which prides itself on maintaining law and order, has been relatively careful about protecting civil rights workers, and there has not been enough civil rights action within the city limits to provide what COFO people tend to call a confrontation; all in all, the city is more of a communications--and--planning center than a scene of battle. At the COFO headquarters, a storefront office on Lynch Street, in the Negro business district, efficient white girls in cotton

print dresses decorate the walls daily with fresh “incident reports” listing arrests or beatings of COFO workers in other parts of the state, but whenever the stray bomb lands—as on the second day of my visit, when two workers were beaten, though not seriously, just a few blocks from the COFO office—the first reaction is that somebody must have broken a truce or wandered out of a demilitarized zone by mistake. At the office, COFO workers in overalls and work shirts who have come into Jackson on errands from small towns in the Delta stroll in and out, and members of the office staff shuttle back and forth incessantly between a row of typewriters and a row of telephones. On Farish Street, in another part of the Negro business district, two groups of lawyers use offices across the street from one another—each on the top floor of a drab two--story building—to deal with the litigation brought on by the constant civil rights arrests. In an office nearby, the National Council of Churches, which has provided ministers, lawyers, and the training facilities for the Summer Project, regularly holds orientation sessions for new arrivals, and a group of respectable--looking clergymen regularly watch quietly as a COFO worker demonstrates how to protect one’s kidneys when knocked down. (“Is it considered permissible to get in a punch or two and then run?” a young minister asked the day I was there. “How good a runner are you?” the COFO demonstrator asked in reply.) Over in the white business district, workmen are installing an interior staircase in the expanded FBI office, which now occupies one floor and part of another of the new First Federal Savings Loan Building, and is still in the unpacking stage, with crates on the floor and pictures of J. Edgar Hoover leaning against the wall. At the state capitol, a few blocks to the north, where a statue of Governor (and Senator) Theodore Bilbo, the late racist, dominates the ground floor, and vividly tinted portraits of Mississippi’s two Miss Americas are enshrined in the rotunda, investigators for the State Sovereignty Commission, the agency charged with preserving segregation, go through Negro newspapers, civil rights literature, and the Worker in order to keep track of which left--wingers are where. All in all, there are so many visitors in town that it is practically impossible to rent a car, and the provision of restaurant and hotel accommodations for the visitors has become a minor industry. Under these circumstances, a conversation about the Catalan separatists or the anarchists of the POUM might not sound out of place, but instead the visitors talk about SNCC (called “Snick” and standing for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), or the National Council (of Churches), or the LCDC (Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee), or the (National) Lawyers Guild, or the APWR (Americans for the Preservation of the White Race), or the Citizens’ Council, or the Klan. Jackson has never stood apart from the rest of Mississippi the way Atlanta has stood apart from Georgia, say, or New Orleans from Louisiana. Traditionally, it has merely been a larger town than the other towns in the state, and not until after World War II was it very much larger. In 1940, it had a population of sixty--two thousand. Now, however, with a population of a hundred and fifty thousand and with ambitions for further expansion, Jackson is the logical place to expect to see any significant indications of moderation on the race issue in Mississippi—simply because it now has the most to lose through the chaos that total defiance of federal desegregation provisions could bring. Such indications appeared recently when it began to look as though the city might comply peacefully with a federal court order that schools start desegregating this fall, and when the board of directors of the Chamber of Commerce made a surprise statement advising businessmen to comply with the public accommodations section of the new civil rights law. After the fact, it is not difficult to find a number of good reasons for the Chamber’s statement. This summer marks the first time Jackson businessmen have ever been faced with anything approaching the power of a federal law. Previously, it was possible to see the conflict as one between the state and a group of Negroes; the civil rights law expanded it, potentially, into one between each individual businessman and the federal government. (There is a theory in Jackson that Mississippi fell victim to its own propaganda; that is, there was so much publicity about how a civil rights law could result in a decent American businessman’s being hauled off to court or to jail by the federal dictator for choosing his own customers that the local businessmen were psychologically prepared for an early surrender.) It is said that business in Jackson was damaged somewhat by the demonstrations and boycotts of last summer, and that businessmen—particularly those directly affected by the law—were happy to be able to make the inevitable transition peacefully by blaming it on the federal government, especially since many of them apparently believed (erroneously) that all those COFO things in town were likely to stage an impressive demonstration for all the FBI people in town on the Fourth of July. Although the national headquarters of the Citizens’ Councils of America is in Jackson, the local Council has never embraced all the important businessmen, as it does in some smaller Mississippi towns, and the suggestion has been made that its point of view seemed to be dominant only because a segregation issue of vital importance to business had not come up. According to one person who was close to those who drafted the Chamber’s statement, “Folks didn’t realize the number of people here who are able to recognize the inevitable when it arrives.” Those people, who had remained silent while the inevitable was approaching, acted with a suddenness that caught the Citizens’ Council element by surprise. There is reason to believe that their action will result in preserving almost complete segregation while avoiding public disturbance—since the facilities, if made available without challenge, are not likely to be used by a great many Jackson Negroes—but in the past, even that argument was not enough to justify a public statement in favor of desegregation. So while people familiar with Jackson are able to explain why such a statement was wise, they admit surprise that it was issued. The Chamber’s statement, according to one member of its board, was “a calculated risk,” and once it had succeeded—of the fourteen hundred firms affiliated with the Chamber, only four

resigned—there was bound to be less pressure against those willing to recognize the possibility of change in Mississippi. A few days after the Chamber advised compliance, the mayor of Jackson supported its stand, and a week or so after that, when Mississippians for Public Education, a group composed mainly of housewives, announced its existence and its intention of opposing any scheme that might damage the public schools—such as the establishment of private segregated schools supported by state tuition grants—its members, to their amazement, met with practically no abuse. Four days after the group's announcement, its president had received only two letters criticizing her position (one of them asked, among other things, if she realized that “academic standards have fell in any place that has had integration”), and none of the officers in Jackson had received a single unsigned hate letter or late--night phone call.