



The Dispossessed: America's Underclasses from the Civil War to the Present

Jacqueline Jones

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The specter of the Northern "underclass" haunts the American imagination. Many books focus on a piece of the problem: either the North or South, blacks or whites, industrial or agricultural workers. This sweeping chronicle of the roots of poverty reveals for the first time the full contours of this American tragedy. In a moving evocation of what it has meant to be down and out in America, prizewinning historian Jacqueline Jones explores the wrenching displacement of millions of rural Americans, both blacks and whites, beginning after the Civil War and following their great trek into the industrial centers and urban ghettos of the North. Through the stories of ordinary families, "The Dispossessed" systematically dismantles the myth of the "culture of poverty", challenging the central tenets of the underclass debate. Jones shows how families struggled mightily on cotton plantations, in coal mining camps, and in factory towns to piece together a livelihood and free themselves from dependency.

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