



Double Cross: Japanese Americans In Black And White Chicago

Jacalyn D. Harden

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Since the Great Migration of the early twentieth century, Chicago has been a cauldron of race relations, symbolizing the tenacity of discrimination and segregation. But as in other cities with significant populations of Latinos and Asians, Arabs and Jews, this image belies complex racial dynamics. In *Double Cross*, Jacalyn D. Harden provides an essential rethinking of the ways we understand and talk about race, using an examination of the Japanese American community of Chicago's Far North Side to form an innovative new framework for looking at race, identity, and political change.

The Japanese American community in Chicago rapidly expanded between 1940 and 1950 in the aftermath of wartime internment and government relocation programs. Harden tells their story through archival research and interviews with some of the first Japanese Americans who were relocated to Chicago in the 1940s, incorporating her own experiences as an African American scholar who has lived in Japan. The result is a compelling and surprising account of racial interactions, one that clarifies the complex interweaving between black and Asian lives and reclaims a lost history of solidarity between the two groups.

Moving from the Great Migration to the "great relocation" to gentrification, Harden explores the shared history of civil rights struggles that firmly links Japanese and African Americans, most importantly the issue of reparations (for internment during World War II and slavery, respectively). She describes the efforts of Japanese Americans to "double-cross the color line" by building coalitions across race, age, and class boundaries, and their vexed position as sometimes "colored," sometimes white (for example, the Japanese American soldier who was instructed to use the white washrooms at boot camp in Alabama during World War II, while thousands were being relocated to internment camps).

Double Cross is a major contribution to our thought about race relations, challenging orthodoxy and shedding new light on the complex identities, conflicting interests, and external forces that have defined the concept of race in the United States.

Jacalyn D. Harden is assistant professor of anthropology at Seattle University.

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