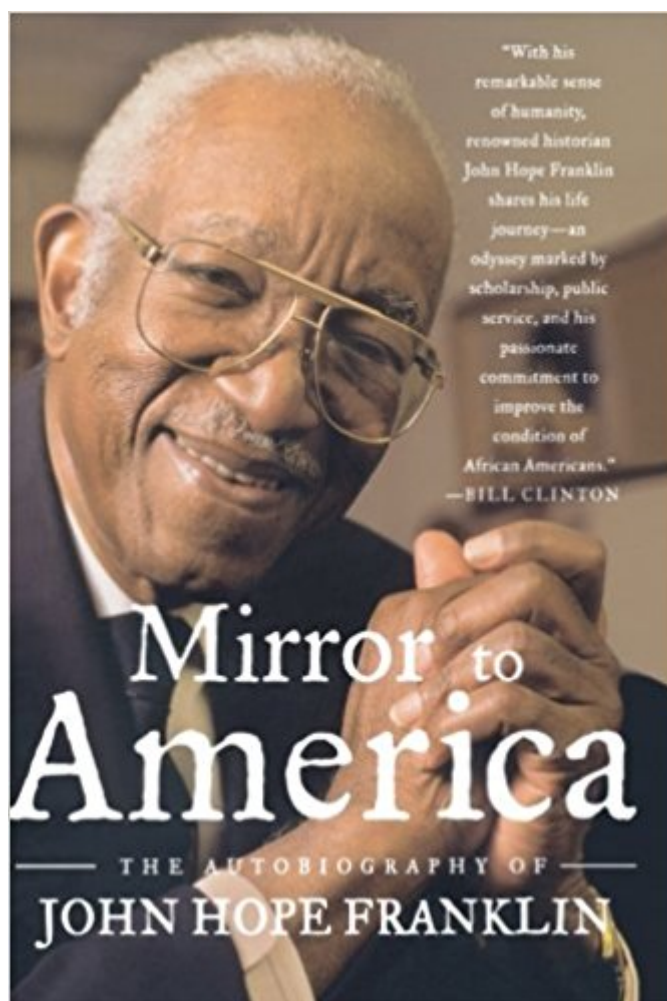


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# Mirror To America: The Autobiography Of John Hope Franklin



## Synopsis

John Hope Franklin lived through America's most defining twentieth-century transformation, the dismantling of legally protected racial segregation. A renowned scholar, he has explored that transformation in its myriad aspects, notably in his 3.5-million-copy bestseller, *From Slavery to Freedom*. Born in 1915, he, like every other African American, could not help but participate: he was evicted from whites-only train cars, confined to segregated schools, threatened—once with lynching—and consistently subjected to racism's denigration of his humanity. Yet he managed to receive a Ph.D. from Harvard; become the first black historian to assume a full professorship at a white institution, Brooklyn College; and be appointed chair of the University of Chicago's history department and, later, John B. Duke Professor at Duke University. He has reshaped the way African American history is understood and taught and become one of the world's most celebrated historians, garnering over 130 honorary degrees. But Franklin's participation was much more fundamental than that. From his effort in 1934 to hand President Franklin Roosevelt a petition calling for action in response to the Cordie Cheek lynching, to his 1997 appointment by President Clinton to head the President's Initiative on Race, and continuing to the present, Franklin has influenced with determination and dignity the nation's racial conscience. Whether aiding Thurgood Marshall's preparation for arguing *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, marching to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965, or testifying against Robert Bork's nomination to the Supreme Court in 1987, Franklin has pushed the national conversation on race toward humanity and equality, a life long effort that earned him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor, in 1995. *Intimate, at times revelatory, Mirror to America* chronicles Franklin's life and this nation's racial transformation in the twentieth century, and is a powerful reminder of the extent to which the problem of America remains the problem of color.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

At 90, Franklin recalls his extraordinary life. Born in the Oklahoma territory in 1915 and descended from slaves, he studied at Harvard, taught at some of the nation's most prestigious universities, served on committees for FDR and Bill Clinton, published seminal histories of blacks in America and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom for his work in civil rights. Franklin strove to evade the draft in WWII after being treated shamefully by the draft board when he tried to enlist, and did research for Thurgood Marshall in *Brown v. Board of Education*. Every aspect of Franklin's life has been influenced by the institutionalized racism he's experienced since he was six, when he was forced off a train for sitting in a car reserved for whites. Yet Franklin relates this all in dry, flat prose steeped in minutiae. The larger aspects of his life are glossed over; missing entirely is the emotional response to the ubiquitous racism. Nor does Franklin contextualize his experiences (e.g., in 1945, he refused to move to the back of the bus, but he fails to juxtapose this event with the Rosa Parks incident 10 years later). This disappointing autobiography fails to depict Franklin as the trailblazing iconoclast he was and is. Photos. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

At the age of ninety, Franklin recounts the story of his rise from a childhood in Oklahoma to a career as a pioneering African-American historian, whose work on the history of segregation formed part of the N.A.A.C.P.'s brief in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The journey is shadowed at every stage by episodes of casual bigotry and worse. He was threatened by a would-be lynch mob while surveying the economic conditions of black cotton farmers in Depression-era Mississippi; as he corrected the galleys of his groundbreaking work *"From Slavery to Freedom,"* in 1947, he learned that his older brother, shattered by the experience of racism in the segregated military, "had either fallen or jumped" from a hotel window; and, after he hosted a dinner on the eve of receiving the Presidential Medal of Freedom, a white woman gave him a numbered ticket and asked him to retrieve her coat. Copyright © 2006 The New Yorker --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Dr. John Hope Franklin's autobiography, *Mirror to America*, accomplishes several things: 1) It gives a detailed account of the author's life and vividly demonstrates the struggle African Americans faced regardless of their education, benevolence, and willingness to be a good citizen despite daily obstacles of prejudice. 2) It provides detailed insight into the inner workings of Black communities and their interactions with White communities over a period of 90 years. 3) It gives inspiration and pride to African Americans who sincerely yearn for an African-American male mentor to give guidance. The scarcity of African-American male mentors lends more hardship to being a Black male. It is sometimes quite burdensome for Black males who strive to overcome constant obstacles as they push forward to make a place for themselves in the world.

interesting book, great historian

Fast shipping! Excellent!

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. I was able to pick up on this book after watching an interview with Dr. Franklin on my local television station. It gave an interesting and clear view of the development of one of the most impressive historians of our time over a period of some seventy years. My only regret is that I never had the privilege or the pleasure of meeting the man. It is an easy read with lots of detail. I was amazed at Franklin's ability to remember all those names over the years of his life. Truly a great read!

This book was inspirational to me. I am very grateful I was allowed to stumble across it. It helped me to gain a higher degree of respect for Dr. Franklin considering what he has done and when he accomplished those achievements (along with maintaining his family). This book also gave me a greater appreciation of the opportunities that are now open to African-Americans as a people. I had originally checked this book out at the library and in the course of reading it decided that I should own a copy. The very intellectual Dr. Franklin has written this book in a way that seems to convey his personality. I felt like I got to know him, the man, every so slightly in a personal way. I wish I had read this earlier in my life.

if you are interested in American history as it truly was, written by one of America's great historians. Full of wit, intelligence, courage and compassion.

I only knew of the author at Duke and knew nothing of his prior life and struggles. I also expected a reasonably dry account of a scholar's life. Instead I discovered a man who had major influence on Supreme Court decisions, discrimination issues in universities, the civil rights movement in this country and abroad. I was moved by the warmth and strength of the relationship between the author and his wife.

One of my best reads ever. I always enjoy behind the scenes info. I'm still not much of a history buff but I sure did enjoy reading this book because it shared some history in a very enjoyable way. Hats off to Brother John Hope Franklin.....may he rest in peace and be granted entrance to paradise. What a wonderful man. Peace

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