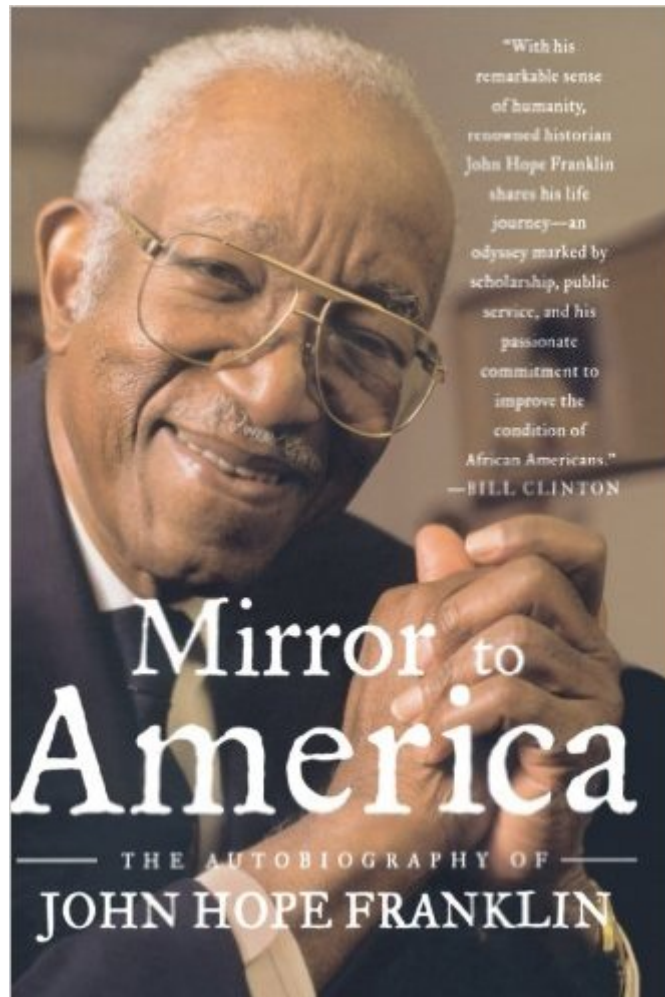


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Mirror To America: The Autobiography Of John Hope Franklin



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.

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Customer Reviews

Back in the 1970's, when I worked as an education assistant at a small historical library in Ohio, John Hope Franklin spent several days in residence doing research. Having a man of such stature in our midst was a rare occurrence, and the head librarian had instructed us to walk on eggs so as not to disturb him; to her chagrin, I was scheduled to lead a group of eighth graders on a tour during his stay. Before my charges entered the building I explained who Dr. Franklin was and why it was very important that we not disrupt his work. As we tiptoed silently through the reading room hoping to go unnoticed, Dr. Franklin looked up, smiled and asked me to bring them over. He inquired about their school, their studies, their interests in history, etc. before discussing his current research project with them. Their teacher told me they were still talking about him months later. Each page of this astounding memoir reminded of that compassion, that ability to connect with people at all ages and levels of experience and sophistication. John Hope Franklin is more than a world-class scholar. Personally and professionally, he is the bridge connecting America to its African American history. At times I felt like I was rereading *FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM*, augmented by personal asides and inside stories. Reviewers detail Franklin's numerous high profile accomplishments, but for me, smaller, more personal moments in the book stand out. For example, I gave little thought to the obstacles he would have encountered while trying to access archives in the Jim Crow South, despite his impeccable Harvard credentials. Even when librarians were supportive, they had to work around the absurdities of segregation, sometimes with ironic results.

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