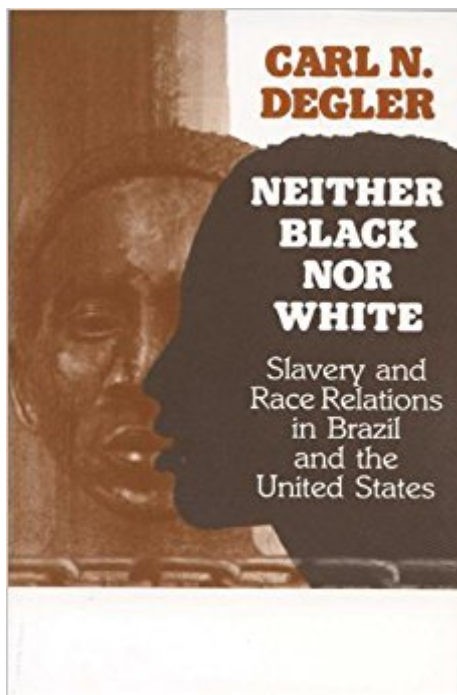




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Neither Black Nor White: Slavery And Race Relations In Brazil And The United States



Synopsis

Carl Degler's 1971 Pulitzer-Prize-winning study of comparative slavery in Brazil and the United States is reissued in the Wisconsin paperback edition, making it accessible for all students of American and Latin American history and sociology. Until Degler's groundbreaking work, scholars were puzzled by the differing courses of slavery and race relations in the two countries. Brazil never developed a system of rigid segregation, such as appeared in the United States, and blacks in Brazil were able to gain economically and retain far more of their African culture. Rejecting the theory of Gilberto Freyre and Frank Tannenbaum that Brazilian slavery was more humane, Degler instead points to a combination of demographic, economic, and cultural factors as the real reason for the differences. In the early 1970s when studies in social history were beginning to blossom on the North American scene, Carl Degler's prize-winning contribution was a thoughtful provocative essay in comparative history. Its thoughtfulness has not diminished with the years. Indeed, it is as topical today as when it was first published. The Brazilian experience with rapid industrialization and its attempt to restore democratic government indicates that the issues which Degler treated in the early 1970s are more pertinent than ever today. Franklin W. Knight, Department of History, Johns Hopkins University.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mr. Degler's book is writing and history at its serious best. Using Frank Tannenbaum's "Slave and Citizen," as a launching pad, Carl Degler adds in all the nuances, bells and whistles needed not only to give us a good historical account, but also to tell an exceedingly interesting story. He "texturizes"

and puts "flesh and bones" onto Tannebaum's skeletal framework: Taking up where Tannenbaum's leaves off, he adds dimensionality to that author's work. In re-examining the Tannenbaum hypotheses with a fine-tooth comb, Degler sorts and churns them, and squeezes them until all the truth is wrung out. Then he begins anew with his own modified hypotheses that extend and builds upon those of Tannenbaum. In this re-examination, nothing is left to chance. Every cul de sac is explored until its secrets are dug up. Only then does Degler move on to the next topic and on to the next discovery. The book is much too rich and robust for a single review to do it any kind of justice; for the real substance lies in the beauty of the details and in the many culturally fresh examples. The best one can do is to point to the highlights of the book and to encourage the reader to buy it and discover for himself what outstanding historical writing is really like. In Degler's version of the comparative analysis of slavery in the U.S. and Brazil, two central questions guide the study: (1) What accounts for the development of miscegenation in Brazil, and the corresponding development of segregation in the U.S.? (2) Can the differences in the two forms of slavery account for these societal differences? It is chapter I and II, of six, that does the heavy lifting, as the author sets about the business of answering these two questions.

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