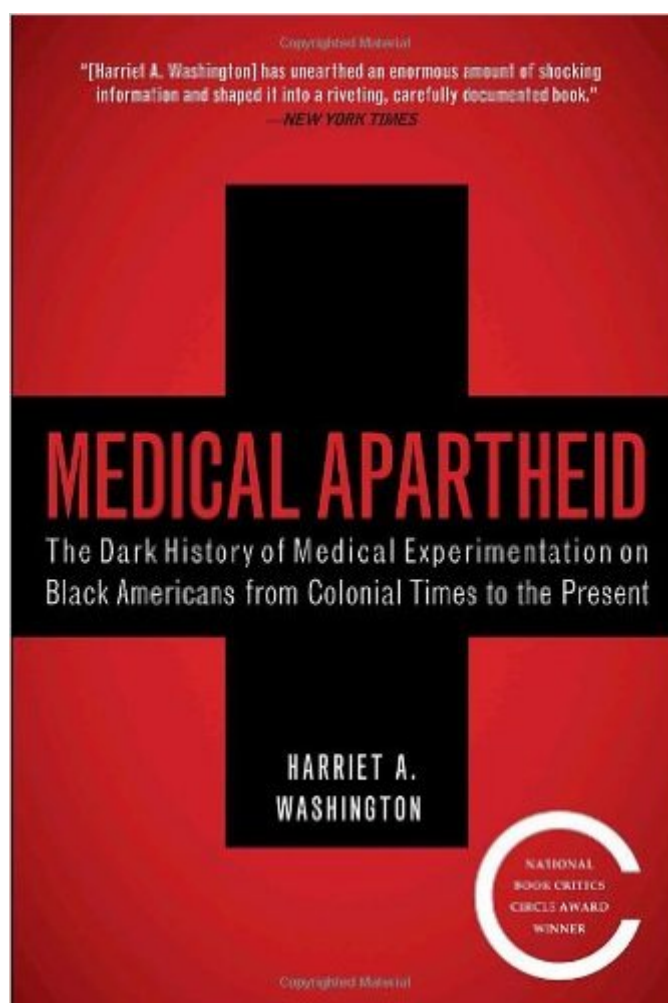


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Medical Apartheid: The Dark History Of Medical Experimentation On Black Americans From Colonial Times To The Present



Synopsis

National Book Critics Circle Award Winner (Nonfiction) PEN/Oakland Award Winner BCALA Nonfiction Award Winner Gustavus Meyers Award Winner From the era of slavery to the present day, the first full history of black America's shocking mistreatment as unwilling and unwitting experimental subjects at the hands of the medical establishment. *Medical Apartheid* is the first and only comprehensive history of medical experimentation on African Americans. Starting with the earliest encounters between black Americans and Western medical researchers and the racist pseudoscience that resulted, it details the ways both slaves and freedmen were used in hospitals for experiments conducted without their knowledge—a tradition that continues today within some black populations. It reveals how blacks have historically been prey to grave-robbing as well as unauthorized autopsies and dissections. Moving into the twentieth century, it shows how the pseudoscience of eugenics and social Darwinism was used to justify experimental exploitation and shoddy medical treatment of blacks, and the view that they were biologically inferior, oversexed, and unfit for adult responsibilities. Shocking new details about the government's notorious Tuskegee experiment are revealed, as are similar, less-well-known medical atrocities conducted by the government, the armed forces, prisons, and private institutions. The product of years of prodigious research into medical journals and experimental reports long undisturbed, *Medical Apartheid* reveals the hidden underbelly of scientific research and makes possible, for the first time, an understanding of the roots of the African American health deficit. At last, it provides the fullest possible context for comprehending the behavioral fallout that has caused black Americans to view researchers—and indeed the whole medical establishment—with such deep distrust. No one concerned with issues of public health and racial justice can afford not to read *Medical Apartheid*, a masterful book that will stir up both controversy and long-needed debate.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book last year about this time because I was in the midst of writing a M.A. Thesis focused on racial differences in trust in the patient-physician relationship. I read the first and seventh chapters and put the book down because my stomach was deeply disturbed by the books' contents. I was disappointed that the terms, "trust," "distrust," or "mistrust" were not indexed in the back of the book. Nonetheless, I decided ind to put the book on the list for my qualifying exams--it was to my knowledge the most comprehensive assessment of race and medical experimentation written to date. I finished reading the book from start to finish last week. I was deeply impressed that Washington was able to cover the breadth of history without shortchanging the respect due to the grave matters dealt within between the covers of *Medical Apartheid*. Some critics of the book have stated that they are unsure whether she is accurately portraying the truth of the history of medical research. Others suggest that her emotions may have guided the presentation of the material. My review will be directed to such responses of the book. I myself had doubts initially. The things I began reading about last December were too grotesque for them to have actually happened and the dispassion characterizing the medical researchers who went about their work is at odds with the Hippocratic Oath that is supposedly the center of Western medicine. However, more recent work by

As its title states, this book examines the history of medically "justified" and pseudo-science backed abuses of black Americans from colonial to modern times. Harriet Washington traces American racism from a medical standpoint from the early days, when science was more curious than anything else, to the days of slavery, when religion and science went hand in hand to justify by divine sanction, on the one hand, and by scientific reason, on the other, that black slaves were inferior to their white masters - morally, physically and mentally; after the end of slavery, when that brand of religious racism held less sway, Darwinism was pulled into the mix; and, now, when words such as "inferior" are never used in a racial context, expect in a discussion of historical viewpoints, or by the most ardent racists, other, more insidious terms pop up - for the same purposes of exploitation and abuse. While the evolution of racism in the US is not the main topic of this book, it is inevitably linked; this book is an interesting look at how the two, racism and racist abuse of

minorities, have worked together throughout American history. This book is easy to read language-wise, although the content is very difficult at times. Some of the highlights of Washington's work:- She examines how the slave-holders wielded faulty - and, sometimes, simultaneously contradictory - scientific theories to justify the harshest abuses of black slaves, as well as the institution of slavery itself. African-Americans were both extremely susceptible to disease and incapable of living on their own (thusly in need of their masters' gracious benevolence), yet at the same immune to diseases white people could contract in the fields, doing the same labor.

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