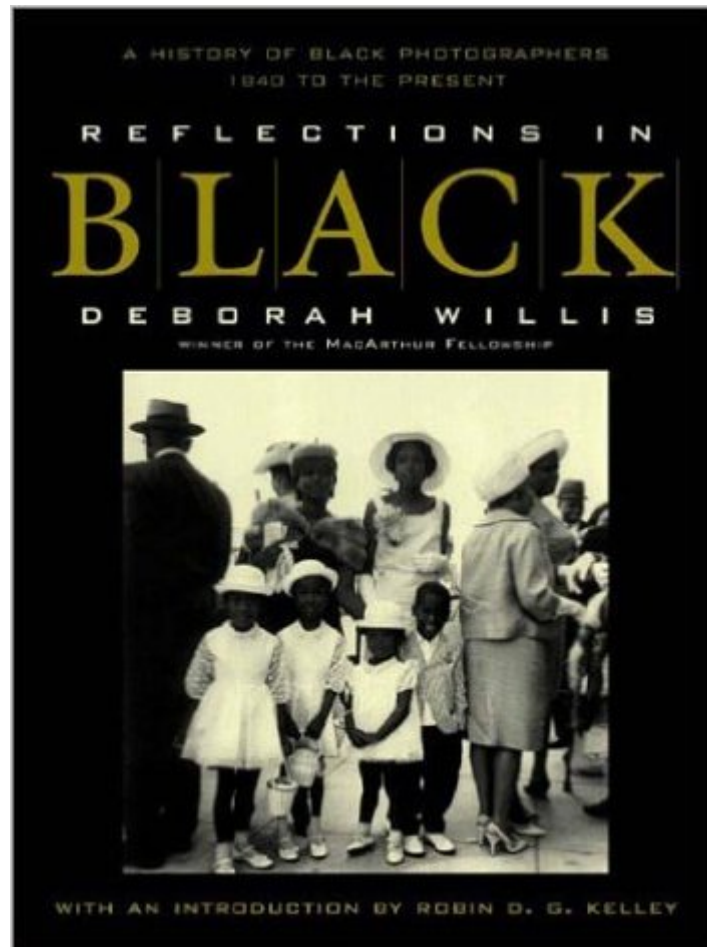


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Reflections In Black: A History Of Black Photographers 1840 To The Present



Synopsis

"[N]othing less than an epic of Homeric proportions....Willis's magnificent gathering of images...rewrites American history."—Robin D. G. Kelley
Reflections in Black, the first comprehensive history of black photographers, is a groundbreaking pictorial collection of African American life. Featuring the work of undisputed masters such as James VanDerZee, Gordon Parks, and Carrie Mae Weems among dozens of others, this book is a refutation of the gross caricature of black life that many mainstream photographers have manifested by continually emphasizing poverty over family, despair over hope. Nearly 600 images offer rich, moving glimpses of everyday black life, from slavery to the Great Migration to contemporary suburban life, including rare antebellum daguerrotypes, photojournalism of the civil rights era, and multimedia portraits of middle-class families. A work so significant that it has the power to reconfigure our conception of American history itself, Reflections in Black demands to be included in every American family's library as an essential part of our heritage. A Los Angeles Times and Washington Post Book World Best Book of 2000, and a Good Morning, America best gift book of 2000. 600 duotone photographs, 32 pages of color.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

... For more than a century, according to Deborah Willis, curator of photography at the Smithsonian, black photographers deliberately used their work to counter prevailing racial stereotypes and enhance racial pride. Her monumental portfolio of photographs by these artists, studio owners, and

itinerant "painters with light" does more than counter stereotypes; it defies attempts to generalize about its subject. People in this arresting collection of pictures are caught up in all kinds of ordinary pursuits--reading, working, dining, marrying, praying, talking, playing games, posing in lovely clothes, getting haircuts, making music or speeches or dinner--in a spirited, generally trustful relationship with the camera. Clearly Willis's criterion as she selected photographs was, as she says in the text, "expressive power." Still, white Americans viewing these pictures are likely to bring to the experience the same old images of slavery, Civil Rights marches, and past or present media caricatures of black life that they've drawn from school and popular culture all their lives. Perhaps the delightful photographs of children in the book will take on ominous overtones because we know of future trials the childish mind can't predict. But such a reaction can keep us from realizing that what's on the child's mind may be partly the point. For example, two Boston children have been posed in front of ornate ironwork, wearing starched lace dresses (it's 1910) and starched bows in their hair. They look beautiful--and stiff, and miserable! Good little girls, they've let Mother dress them up today, but they seem to want to tear off those enormous bows, jump the iron fence, and tumble around on the grass like anyone else their age.

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