



Mississippi: An American Journey

By Anthony Walton

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To most Americans, Mississippi is not a state but a scar, the place where segregation took its ugliest form and struck most savagely at its challengers. But to many Americans, Mississippi is also home. And it is this paradox, with all its overtones of history and heartache, that Anthony Walton—whose parents escaped Mississippi for the relative civility of the Midwest—explores in this resonant and disquieting work of travel writing, history, and memoir.

Traveling from the Natchez Trace to the yawning cotton fields of the Delta and from plantation houses to air-conditioned shopping malls, Walton challenged us to see Mississippi's memories of comfort alongside its legacies of slavery and the Klan. He weaves in the stories of his family, as well as those of patricians and sharecroppers, redneck demagogues and martyred civil rights workers, novelists and bluesmen, black and white. *Mississippi* is a national saga in brilliant microcosm, splendidly written and profoundly moving.

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Mississippi: An American Journey By Anthony Walton Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #301014 in Books
- Brand: Walton, Anthony
- Published on: 1997-01-28
- Released on: 1997-01-28
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .60" w x 5.20" l, .58 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 288 pages

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

At 30, Walton, a black man raised middle-class in Illinois, found himself questioning his identity and his heritage. So he took a journey both southerly and inward, through Mississippi, where his parents grew up and where American racism has been most entrenched. His tale meanders, combining travelogue, interviews, meditation, even his own poetry (awkwardly used to punctuate sections); one section consists of a chorus of voices, including those of Faulkner, Ellison and bluesman Robert Johnson. Certain moments resonate, such as Walton's visits to a historically preserved plantation and to the Ole Miss campus, full of Confederate memorabilia. He comes to appreciate the enormous effort of his "taciturn, often remote" father to give his son the privileges he himself never had. Walton's conclusion: we must learn the history of Mississippi to understand America's racial dilemma. His book is one of deeply felt inquiry, but it suffers from its poor organization. Photos.

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From Scientific American

Essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the troubled soul of the South.

Review

"Affecting.... A compassionate meditation on this country and South, their past, present, and future."- Willie Morris *The New York Times Book Review*

"Essential reading for anyone who wishes to understand the troubled soul of the South."- Caryl Phillips, author of *Crossing the River*

"Wonderfully illuminating and always interesting."- Richard Bernstein, *The New York Times*

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