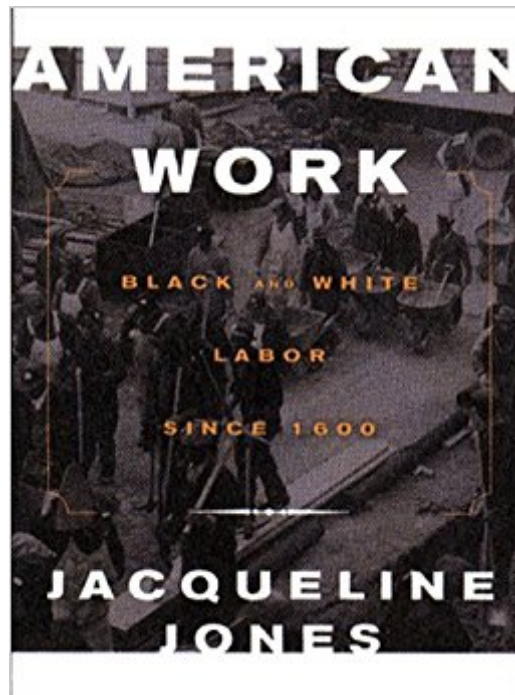




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# American Work: Four Centuries Of Black And White Labor



## Synopsis

This is a social history of almost four centuries of competition, co-operation and exclusion. In a New World built on a foundation of tobacco, rice, timber and peas, human labour was the key to wealth and colonists knew that most labour was "naturally" not free. Red, white and black men, women and children could all expect "hard usage" by masters, husbands and fathers. As the wilderness was cultivated and economies stabilized, however, life got better - for some. This book is the story of how blacks were excluded from significant social transformation in American history - from farm work to factory work, from a blue-collar to a white-collar economy. Meanwhile, whites have characterized blacks simultaneously as lazy and ruthless competitors for their jobs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jones (history, Brandeis Univ.) has written a massive study of black working people in the United States from the first arrival of slaves in the early 1600s until the present. Running throughout the narrative is the theme that in the long history of work in America, blacks have always suffered disproportionate burdens and received unequal rewards. Jones argues that emphasizing employer discrimination downplays the role of the state, which, from earliest colonial times, has given white workers advantages over their black counterparts. Blacks, however, have always pressed hard against employment discrimination. In the 20th century their struggle for decent jobs has taken the form of lawsuits, grassroots boycotts of retail stores, and protests against racially discriminatory labor unions. The writing is often turgid. Recommended for labor and Afro-American collections of

academic libraries. Harry Frummerman, formerly with Hunter Coll., New York Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Jones, who chairs Brandeis University's history department, is author of *The Dispossessed* (1992) and *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow* (1986), which won the Bancroft American History Prize. In the section titled "Insubordinates," Jones surveys the colonial era, when black, red, and white servants and slaves, in every colony, received "hard usage" from employers/masters who recognized that human labor, the source of their wealth, could also challenge their control. The period from the Revolution to the Civil War is the topic of "Workers and Overworkers

This is a history of working people in American. While it focuses on on Black/white racism has been used, it provides important information about the conditions of all working people since the earliest days of settlement. I found Jones' discussion of attempts to exploit Native Americans as slaves and indentured servants to be particularly illuminating. Jones also talks about the extensive systems of limiting the freedom of working people through contracts of indenture, peonage, and other forms that limited freedom of whites and black as well, as the continued manipulation of the image of what labor Blacks could accomplish to divide workers and deepen the exploitation of all. While I believe Jones' strength is her discussion of the colonial period and the AnteBellum North, her discussion of the selective urbanization and industrialization of African Americans since World War II is outstanding. She shows how the system of defacto segregation and continued discrimination is the based for African American poverty today. Most interestingly, she discusses the similarity between the ways that current immigrants, with and without papers, are oppressed and colonial systems of binding labor. From this well-documented history, you understand that throughout its history, Capitalism in America has never allowed any real freedom to workers that wasn't taken in struggle, and how crucial racism is to both the past and present of this country.

Nice buy, nice service

BEST BOOK ever written, in my experienced opinion. All people craving info. on racial divisions (and aren't we all?) should pick up this classic text. It ingeniously describes the evolution of the working classes in America. And who said work was BORING? Not this kind. This would make the perfect gift for your grandmother, but more importantly, for yourself. A riveting journey into the soul, not to be missed by any history buff. *American Work* is true to its name, it was written by an American,

cause shes gotta work.

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