

FOUR TALKS ON BLACK HISTORY A WHITE HISTORIAN READS BLACK HISTORY



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"Auction and Negro Sales," Atlanta, 1864. Photographer: George Barnard. Library of Congress.



Image: Protest against the lynching of four African Americans in Georgia, Washington, DC, 1946. Associated Press photograph. Library of Congress.

Historian Susan Strasser seeks to serve people grappling with contemporary issues of race and racism with these four illustrated talks, *A White Historian Reads Black History*.

A WHITE HISTORIAN CONFRONTS AMERICAN SLAVERY

Slavery is arguably the most important topic in our history: American ideas about freedom developed in relation to slavery, it was the primary cause of the Civil War, and it was at the heart of American economic growth.

Illustrated with nearly sixty images, *A White Historian Confronts American Slavery* is the first talk in the *A White Historian Reads Black History* series. This talk uses new work from historians to describe slavery as inherent to the development of American capitalism, to put the treatment of human property into that context, and to describe resistance to the slave system. It concludes with thoughts about the contemporary importance of this history.

A WHITE HISTORIAN CONFRONTS LYNCHING

The Jim Crow system of segregated facilities and state-sanctioned repression was held in place by terror. More than 5,000 African Americans were lynched in the United States between 1877 and 1950—most of them men, and most in the South.

Many scholars and activists remind us that every image of a tormented black body has power. This presentation, offering about sixty images, some quite disturbing, is offered as stark evidence of that history and in memory of those whose murder and torture they represent.

On most occasions, this talk is part of *A Double Take on Lynching*, presented with poet Marcia Cole, who reads her powerful, prizewinning *A Bitter Suite*, offering a complementary approach to this difficult topic.



Outside the White House, March 12, 1965. Photographer: Warren K. Leffler. Library of Congress.



Detroit, opposite Sojourner Truth Homes, 1942. Photographer: Arthur S. Siegel. Library of Congress.

A WHITE HISTORIAN EXPLORES BLACK VOTING RIGHTS

American voting has historically been restricted on the basis of many things other than race, including gender, class, ethnicity, religion, age, and personal history. But race stands out.

Only African Americans have had the right to vote granted and repeatedly taken away. Voting has been one aspect of a larger system of racist laws and customs, and the right to vote has been intertwined with the rights to good education, housing, and jobs. And that system has been backed by violence, terror, and intimidation.

Using nearly sixty images and maps, *A White Historian Explores Black Voting Rights* surveys this history, with emphasis on two moments of possibility— Reconstruction and the early 1960s—and on recent attacks on the right to vote.

A WHITE HISTORIAN CONFRONTS RESIDENTIAL SEGREGATION

Although neighborhood segregation is now so common in the United States that it almost seems natural, black and white people lived in close proximity in early American cities.

This illustrated talk explores how separate neighborhoods developed. Racial segregation was deliberately organized by the actors in the real estate system: cities through zoning; the Federal government through the FHA, the GI Bill, and the 1949 Housing Act; developers through restrictive covenants; realtors through blockbusting; and banks, chambers of commerce, landlords, and public housing administrators. Segregation was enforced by violence and terror.

Susan Strasser is an award-winning historian and a Distinguished Lecturer for the Organization of American Historians. She has been praised by the *New Yorker* for “retrieving what history discards: the taken-for-granted minutiae of everyday life.” Her books include *Never Done: A History of American Housework*, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market*, and *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash*. Strasser is Richards Professor Emerita of American History at the University of Delaware.

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