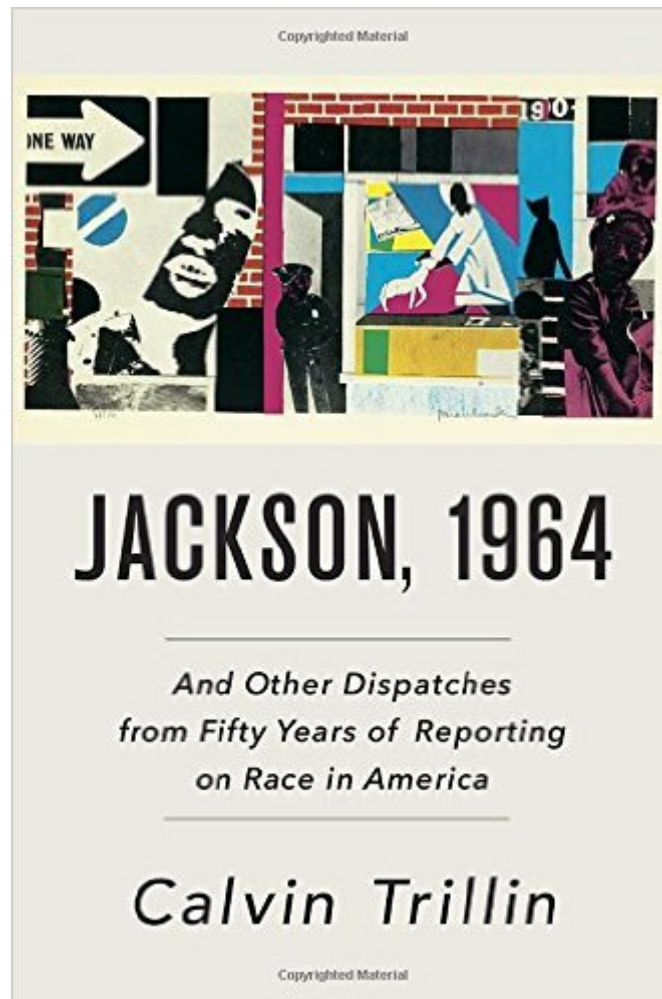


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# Jackson, 1964: And Other Dispatches From Fifty Years Of Reporting On Race In America



## Synopsis

From bestselling author and beloved New Yorker writer Calvin Trillin, a deeply resonant, career-spanning collection of articles on race and racism, from the 1960s to the present. In the early sixties, Calvin Trillin got his start as a journalist covering the Civil Rights Movement in the South. Over the next five decades of reporting, he often returned to scenes of racial tension. Now, for the first time, the best of Trillin's pieces on race in America have been collected in one volume. In the title essay of *Jackson, 1964*, we experience Trillin's riveting coverage of the pathbreaking voter registration drive known as the Mississippi Summer Project—coverage that includes an unforgettable airplane conversation between Martin Luther King, Jr., and a young white man sitting across the aisle. ("I'd like to be loved by everyone," King tells him, "but we can't always wait for love.") In the years that follow, Trillin rides along with the National Guard units assigned to patrol black neighborhoods in Wilmington, Delaware; reports on the case of a black homeowner accused of manslaughter in the death of a white teenager in an overwhelmingly white Long Island suburb; and chronicles the remarkable fortunes of the Zulu Social Aid & Pleasure Club, a black carnival krewe in New Orleans whose members parade on Mardi Gras in blackface. He takes on issues that are as relevant today as they were when he wrote about them. Excessive sentencing is examined in a 1970 piece about a black militant in Houston serving thirty years in prison for giving away one marijuana cigarette. The role of race in the use of deadly force by police is highlighted in a 1975 article about an African American shot by a white policeman in Seattle. Uniting all these pieces are Trillin's unflinching eye and graceful prose. *Jackson, 1964* is an indispensable account of a half-century of race and racism in America, through the lens of a master journalist and writer who was there to bear witness. Praise for *Jackson, 1964* Trillin's elegant storytelling and keen observations sometimes churned my wrath about the glacial pace of progress. That's because to me and millions of African-Americans, the topics of race and poverty—and their adverse impact on the mind and spirit—are, as Trillin acknowledges, not theoretical; they're personal. —Dorothy Butler Gilliam, *The New York Times Book Review* (Editor's Choice) "Everything in *Jackson, 1964* resonates. . . . The volume is more than a history lesson. The issues it considers—police shootings, voter suppression tactics, race-based acts of terrorism—seem taken from today's headlines." —Dwight Garner, *The New York Times* "With the diligent clarity, humane wit, polished prose and attention to pertinent detail that exemplify Trillin's journalism at its best . . . *Jackson, 1964* drives home a sobering realization: Even with signs of progress, racism in America is news that stays news." —USA Today "These unsettling tales, elegantly written and wonderfully reported, are like black-and-white

snapshots from the national photo album. They depict a society in flux but also stubbornly unmoved through the decades when it comes to many aspects of race relations. . . . The grace Trillin brings to his job makes his stories all the more poignant.âThe Christian Science Monitor âAn exceptional collection [from] master essayist Trillin.âBooklist (starred review)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The most haunting and tragic aspect of this anthology of columns dealing with the topic of race in America is that while some of them date back 50 years or more, the topics that too many of them deal with could just as easily be pulled from the headlines today. A white cop shoots a black man? Check, only instead of 2016, or 2015, or 2014 (or any other single year...) it's an article Trillin wrote about an incident in Seattle in 1975. Student activists demanding that university administrators accommodate them and offer new programs and facilities? Not 2015 at Mizzou, but Wisconsin State University Oshkosh in 1968, again as chronicled by Trillin. An African-American civil rights leader politely countering the suggestion of a white man that blacks shouldn't "incite" anger against their fellow Americans by pointing out that he is exposing discord, not fostering it? Again, it may sound contemporary, but it's Martin Luther King, discussing his philosophy of non-violent resistance to discrimination and segregation. It's these echoes and reverberations that make this anthology worth reading, even though the problems endure. Indeed, while the themes remain, these articles serve as a reminder of the many and varied ways in which race has become the third rail of American politics and society over the life of the republic. Go to a nightclub? Be prepared to show three

separate forms of photo ID if you're black. (Boston, 1976) Just because the Mormon church discriminates against African Americans (at the time Trillin was writing, the leadership had not yet had its "revelation" that would later allow blacks to become priesthood holders), don't boo and hiss at the lily-white basketball team fielded by Brigham Young University, the church-funded college.

Calvin Trillin remains one of my favorite essayists. And I also loved his tribute to his wife ABOUT ALICE and the books of poetry he writes every four years about the presidential candidates. (Surely his head will explode when he writes about some of the clowns who have been in the race this year. It will be, as the cliché goes, like shooting fish in a barrel.) This collection of essays JACKSON, 1964, consists of 16 articles that were all published in THE NEW YORKER magazine dating from 1964 to 1995. Most of the essays have to do with race in the South although Mr. Trillin also includes Wilmington, Delaware; Oshkosh, Wisconsin; Denver, Colorado; Provo, Utah; Newark, New Jersey; Seattle, Washington; Boston, Massachusetts; and Long Island, New York. The subjects are familiar: voter registration, school desegregation, housing discrimination, different treatment of blacks, particularly black men in the courts, disparate treatment of black customers in bars, the KKK, outrageously unfair prison sentences for black men—by anyone's standards unless you lived in Texas in 1970—racism in a religious college, the never-ending debate of how much black blood determines one's race, and the lives of black people and white people are not weighed on the same set of scales. As I read these essays that are arranged in chronological order, I was amazed and saddened that with all the changes regarding race we have seen in this country since 1964, the date of the first essay—our first black president, for example-- that so much of what Mr. Trillin writes about could have been written in 2015 and 2016. Black men still get longer prison sentences than whites for similar offenses.

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