



## Documenting the Black Experience: Essays on African American History, Culture and Identity in Nonfiction Films

By Novotny Lawrence

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History taught at the elementary, middle, high school and even college levels often excludes significant events from African American history, such as the murder of Emmett Till or the murder of four black girls by the Ku Klux Klan in the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham. Such events are integral parts of history that continue to inform America's racial politics. Their exclusion is a problem that this work addresses by bringing more visibility to documentary films focusing on the events. Books treating the history of documentary films follow a similar pattern, omitting the efforts of filmmakers who have continued to focus on African American history. This book works to make documentary discourse more complete, bringing attention to films that cover the African American experience in four areas--civil rights, sports, electronic media, and the contemporary black struggle--demonstrating how the issues continue to inform America's racial politics.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Bridging the gap between often ignored black history and documentary film Novotny Lawrence brings together insightful articles from academics and practicing filmmakers. An overdue and much-needed anthology for the fields of documentary and black studies." --Christine Acham, University of Southern California

"Lawrence presents a collection of straightforward essays on non-narrative cinema that documents pivotal moments in the African American struggle for civil rights. From its account of The Scottsboro Boys' case to the discussion of Jack Johnson in *Unforgivable Blackness*, to the analysis of Shirley Clarke's avant-garde character study, *A Portrait of Jason*, this volume calls attention to several important, but lesser known, films made in the documentary tradition. It will make a useful addition to classrooms and everyday conversations in which we try to reconstruct the tragedy and trials faced by historical subjects like Emmett Till and Dorothy Dandridge, or the difficulties faced by young people growing up in violent neighborhoods." --Mia Mask, Vassar College, author of *Divas on Screen: Black Women in American Film*

#### About the Author

**Novotny Lawrence** is an associate professor of race, media, and popular culture at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale. He has written a book on blaxploitation films of the 1970s as well as articles and book chapters focusing on *The Jeffersons*, the comedy of Dave Chappelle, and black independent cinema.

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