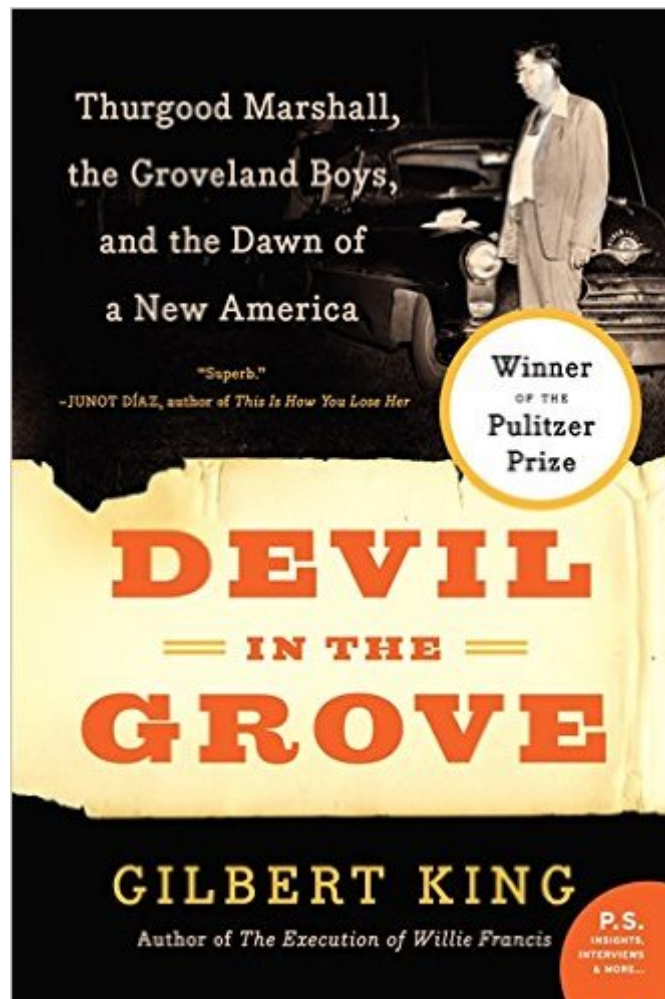


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Devil In The Grove: Thurgood Marshall, The Groveland Boys, And The Dawn Of A New America



Synopsis

* Winner of the 2013 Pulitzer Prize for General Nonfiction* Nominated for a 2013 Edgar Award* Book of the Year (Non-fiction, 2012) The Boston Globe, Christian Science Monitor In 1949, Florida's orange industry was booming, and citrus barons got rich on the backs of cheap Jim Crow labor. To maintain order and profits, they turned to Willis V. McCall, a violent sheriff who ruled Lake County with murderous resolve. When a white seventeen-year-old Groveland girl cried rape, McCall was fast on the trail of four young blacks who dared to envision a future for themselves beyond the citrus groves. By day's end, the Ku Klux Klan had rolled into town, burning the homes of blacks to the ground and chasing hundreds into the swamps, hell-bent on lynching the young men who came to be known as "the Groveland Boys." And so began the chain of events that would bring Thurgood Marshall, the man known as "Mr. Civil Rights," and the most important American lawyer of the twentieth century, into the deadly fray. Associates thought it was suicidal for him to wade into the "Florida Terror" at a time when he was irreplaceable to the burgeoning civil rights movement, but the lawyer would not shrink from the fight--not after the Klan had murdered one of Marshall's NAACP associates involved with the case and Marshall had endured continual threats that he would be next. Drawing on a wealth of never-before-published material, including the FBI's unredacted Groveland case files, as well as unprecedented access to the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund files, King shines new light on this remarkable civil rights crusader, setting his rich and driving narrative against the heroic backdrop of a case that U.S. Supreme Court justice Robert Jackson decried as "one of the best examples of one of the worst menaces to American justice."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I don't often use the phrase "tour de force", but if it isn't applicable to this book, I don't know when it would be. Gilbert King has delivered a solid, in depth, thoroughly researched tome on not only one of the most brutal (although, sadly, little known) civil rights cases in American history, but also a thorough survey on the state of race relations in the American South in the late 1940s and early 1950s. For anyone who has ever wondered exactly what the "Southern Way of Life" is, you need look no further than this hate-fueled tale of widespread murder and mayhem. In a surprisingly slim, albeit dense, 360 pages (of text, plus notes, etc.), King manages to paint a rich, detailed, sickening and enraging picture of Southern "justice" in the Sunshine State. The unsupported word of a white woman (girl, really, whom few really believe) and that of her drunken on-again, off-again husband launch a series of events that leave two young black men dead - one hunted like a dog, the other shot in cold blood - along with two more wrongfully jailed, one on death row. Along the way we witness the racial intimidation and violence of the KKK, the death by firebombing of civil rights leader Harry T. Moore, and the slow turning of the wheels of justice in the nation's highest court. Also along the way we meet the prosecutor, Jesse Hunter, who comes to believe in the innocence of the "Groveland Boys", yet who prosecutes them anyway; the born and bred Southern journalist Mabel Norris Reese whose slow change of heart gets her labeled a "pinko"; and the Southern sheriff in charge of it all, Willis McCall.

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