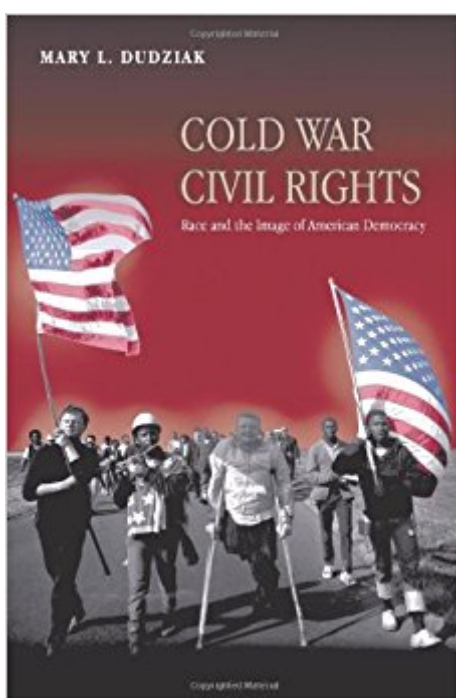


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# Cold War Civil Rights: Race And The Image Of American Democracy (Politics And Society In Twentieth Century America)



## Synopsis

In 1958, an African-American handyman named Jimmy Wilson was sentenced to die in Alabama for stealing two dollars. Shocking as this sentence was, it was overturned only after intense international attention and the interference of an embarrassed John Foster Dulles. Soon after the United States' segregated military defeated a racist regime in World War II, American racism was a major concern of U.S. allies, a chief Soviet propaganda theme, and an obstacle to American Cold War goals throughout Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Each lynching harmed foreign relations, and "the Negro problem" became a central issue in every administration from Truman to Johnson. In what may be the best analysis of how international relations affected any domestic issue, Mary Dudziak interprets postwar civil rights as a Cold War feature. She argues that the Cold War helped facilitate key social reforms, including desegregation. Civil rights activists gained tremendous advantage as the government sought to polish its international image. But improving the nation's reputation did not always require real change. This focus on image rather than substance--combined with constraints on McCarthy-era political activism and the triumph of law-and-order rhetoric--limited the nature and extent of progress. Archival information, much of it newly available, supports Dudziak's argument that civil rights was Cold War policy. But the story is also one of people: an African-American veteran of World War II lynched in Georgia; an attorney general flooded by civil rights petitions from abroad; the teenagers who desegregated Little Rock's Central High; African diplomats denied restaurant service; black artists living in Europe and supporting the civil rights movement from overseas; conservative politicians viewing desegregation as a communist plot; and civil rights leaders who saw their struggle eclipsed by Vietnam. Never before has any scholar so directly connected civil rights and the Cold War. Contributing mightily to our understanding of both, Dudziak advances--in clear and lively prose--a new wave of scholarship that corrects isolationist tendencies in American history by applying an international perspective to domestic affairs.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"In her long-awaited book, Mary Dudziak brilliantly demonstrates the interconnections between race relations and the American response to the early Cold War. . . . Dudziak sets a new standard for literature on race and Cold War foreign policy. . . . Her work deserves a wide audience."--Laura Belmonte, *Journal of Cold War Studies* "This nuanced, scholarly appraisal of the relationship between foreign policy and the civil rights story offers a fresh and provocative perspective on twentieth-century American history."--*Harvard Law Review* "Groundbreaking."--*American Lawyer* "Carefully reasoned, containing vivid accounts, and thoroughly documented with illustrations and 55 pages of explanatory notes, this work helps us rethink the familiar by analyzing the subject matter from a new perspective. It will have broad appeal to historians, other academicians and lay readers interested in American foreign policy and race relations."--*Library Journal* "Mary L. Dudziak . . . astutely explores the intimate relationship between the policy of communist containment and the civil rights movement. . . . Her book thoughtfully and thoroughly documents how ridiculous and hypocritical we appeared to the post-colonial, newly emerging nations of Africa and Asia by championing the ideals of freedom, democracy and economic equity around the world while at the same time shamelessly denying access to those very same principles to millions of Americans at home."--Edward C. Smith, *The Washington Times* "Dudziak earns high praise for her superb work."--*Choice* "[An] important book"--H.W. Brands, *Reviews in American History* "Cold War Civil Rights challenges readers to think globally and locally about the relation between the Cold War and civil rights. It also provides food for thought on the post-Cold War era."--Laurie B. Green, *Law and History Review* "A meticulously researched and eloquently composed study."--Desmond King, *Education Supplement* "Dudziak has marshalled an impressive array of primary source material to substantiate her case, but is is never allowed to hinder the unfolding narrative of the civil rights movement in general or her thesis in particular. . . . [An] excellent study."--George Lewis, *Ethnic & Racial Studies* "An intelligent and informative book that is sure to become a staple of both civil rights

and Cold War historiography."--Steven F. Lawson, *American Historical Review* "Civil rights activists' efforts were watched carefully by the nation and by the world, and now are described and analyzed for us all with masterful skill by Mary Dudziak in *Cold War Civil Rights*. Although the Cold War is over, race remains a critical feature of global politics. As recent events remind us so well, much appears to be tied loosely with the destiny of democracy in the United States and the way that the country is seen by a diverse and divided world. In understanding this process, the issues at stake, the roles that individuals play, and the implications for human rights, *Cold War Civil Rights* will provide enormous assistance."--Paul Gordon Lauren, *Human Rights Quarterly* "Dudziak marvelously frames her discussion of the US civil rights movement in the international and Cold War context in such a way that raises, discusses, and illuminates larger issues that help us to understand how the struggle for human rights proceeds."--Carlo Krieger, *Human Rights Quarterly* "Dudziak's argument is clearly written, prodigiously researched, and profoundly important. . . . *Cold War Civil Rights* . . . is the most comprehensively researched study of the connection between foreign and domestic racial politics in the post-World War II era. Dudziak's book will inspire a reconsideration of postwar civil rights history."--Alex Lubin, *American Quarterly*

This book reflects a growing interest among historians in the global significance of race. . . . It is accessible and will have multiple uses as an approach to civil rights history, as an examination of policy making, and as a model of how a study can be attentive to both foreign and domestic aspects of a particular issue. It is tightly argued, coherent, and polished, and it features some particularly fine writing.

In her book published in 2000, legal historian Mary Dudziak, currently teaching at Emory Law school, focuses on the effects of the cold war on the civil rights movement. Her argument is that while in some ways the cold war era is one of repression, it is also an era of which the civil rights movement is a product. Furthermore, not only does it produce the civil rights movement, the cold war also acts to frame and limit the nations commitment to this movement. Finally, by addressing civil rights reform, the federal government engages in an effort to shape the story into one of triumph, a story of "good over evil, a story of U.S. moral superiority." (5-6) Dudziak uses a plethora of primary and secondary sources to craft her work, and these include State Department archives, the Congressional record and (amongst others) the presidential papers of Lyndon Johnson. In at least two ways her work represents a transnational approach, as she works hard to show the effects of international pressure and opinion on the civil rights movement

and she shows how events in the US play overseas, thus making her work a fine example of transnational history. Speaking of transnational history, Dudziak's work is a fine example of this, and goes a long way to helping understand the effect the cold war has on the civil rights movement. Her narrative style is easy to follow, something which is not always the case when written by legal historians, and this book is useful to both the specialist and the novice. One area of criticism is that she does not address why Moscow changes its tactics and seems to drop criticism of American racism. Russian criticism of the US is an important part of her book, so not addressing the change in strategy seems a bit odd. Another criticism of this work could be that it is very traditional in its approach, in that it is very top down and does not include much from the point of view of women and other groups that are overlooked in traditional historical writings. This is true, however, her point is to write a traditional diplomatic history of the cold war, looking at "big players" and their effects on the world. Otherwise, the book is one which is a great addition to the historiography of both the civil rights movement and the cold war. As I said, it is easy to read and I highly recommend it if you are interested in the Cold War and its effects on the Civil Rights Movement.

I was at first bored about the subject matter. I had to read it for a college class, and I had learned about civil rights and the cold war COUNTLESS times before. So I was immediately bored. BUT, BUT, this book really opened up my eyes to how everything at this age connected together! I always learned about the cold war and civil rights differently. They were two different stages in history, two very different topics, that each had their own exams. But this book did an EXCELLENT job putting it all together! I now see history as a web of events, all of which effect one another. This book showed me how much civil rights and the cold war had to do with each other. I actually learned a lot, and it wasn't a dry read at all. I liked it.

Mary L. Dudziak argues that during the Cold War era, American empire -- cloaked in the false narrative of a plural, democratic, and capitalist America -- shaped and was shaped by its domestic racial politics. As Dudziak demonstrates, Civil Rights Movement gains and fervor had political and social repercussions for the emerging narrative of America as democratic beacon. The 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision, for example, stood as a foreign relations concern due to the direct challenge that Jim Crow offered to so-called "American" democracy. Moreover, by primarily using newspapers, Dudziak shows the transnational significance of the Civil Rights Movement and the ways in which Movement ideas and peoples continually struggled "over the narrative of race" in civil rights era America (252). Although Dudziak makes plain the transit of American racialism, her reliance on

social politics clouds what was also at stake: global markets. It would have been helpful for Dudziak to discuss US business interests and the economic, imperial stakes in the management of US democratic identity abroad. In this way, political economy takes a back seat to discourse, perhaps downplaying what race would also come to mean with the rise of the postwar Global South. Either way, Dudziak provides yet another layer to how the traditional Civil Rights Movement unfolded.

Dudziak provides a refreshing look at the early civil rights movement. Focusing on the international effects of racial tensions in the mid twentieth century. This allows the reader to gain better perspective on the events of the civil rights movement in the United States.

I initially borrowed this book from a professor that I was working with on my honors thesis. After reading it, I had to purchase my own copy. I never realized how interconnected the cold war and civil rights were. This book is truly eye-opening.

I purchased this book for my daughter who was required to read it for her summer reading. She enjoyed the book.

I bought this book for a graduate history class. As I began to write my paper for the class and got to the first citation i noticed that there are no page numbers. The other kindle books that I have bought have page numbers that correspond to the hard copy, but not this one. When I did some research I found that some e-books are paginated others aren't. Nothing to do but find a hard copy, which considering that its Sunday and the local library is closed not much chance of finding a hard copy. Very frustrating. Now. The book is very well written, enjoyable and informative. I encourage everyone who wants to understand the Civil Rights movement in the broader context to read it.

This was a required book for my college class. It did have some interesting points but I would not have read it if I did not have to for class.

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