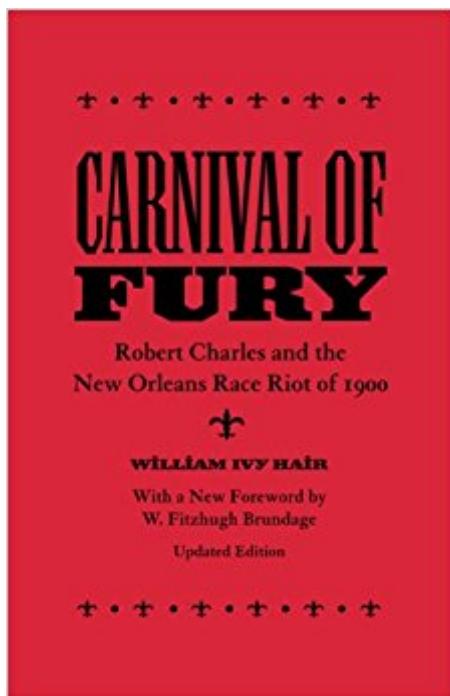


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Carnival Of Fury: Robert Charles And The New Orleans Race Riot Of 1900



Synopsis

Book by Hair, William Ivy

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

William Ivy Hair (1930--1992) was Fuller E. Callaway Professor of Southern History at Georgia College in Milledgeville, Georgia. He is the author of several books, including *The Kingfish and His Realm: The Life and Times of Huey P. Long* and *Bourbonism and Agrarian Protest: Louisiana Politics, 1877--1900*. W. Fitzhugh Brundage is a professor of history and Director of Graduate Studies at the University of North Carolina--Chapel Hill. He is the author of *A Socialist Utopia in the New South: The Ruskin Colonies in Tennessee and Georgia, 1894--1901* and *Lynching in the New South: Georgia and Virginia, 1880--1930*.

Quite curious how a relatively modest book can tell us so much about larger regional and national trends. In this work, Robert Charles is practically a metaphor for the oppressed and abused lives that most African Americans were forced to endure during Jim Crow America. That fact that the story takes place in an urban environment dominated by a Democratic machine that had long since adjusted to doling out favors and patronage to various ethnic groups but could not reconcile itself to the concept of racial equality makes this a history that is at all points tragic and compelling. I would recommend this book to anyone of any age with even the slightest interest in American racial history.

This is a big little book well worth reading and well worth owning with a place of honor in the personal library. Hair does a remarkable job of pulling together the obscure and little-known facts about "Robert Charles", an obscure and little-known historical figure who would have quickly made himself perfectly at home in 1960s America. More importantly, Hair's research and narrative provide a brilliant portrait of a period of American history, approaching the mystery of Robert Charles through a necessarily oblique but dead-on examination of turn of the century racial etiquette in the South; Afro-American attitudes regarding racism, self-defense, identity, militancy, and politics; state and regional economic issues; and the pathological behavior of the white victims of supremacist theories and beliefs. Although the question of who, exactly, was Robert Charles cannot be completely answered--if it could, Hair would have done it--the question of WHY did Robert Charles exist and die as he did is effectively answered through a compelling narrative that proves that history and its writing can be as exciting as any modern story of injustice, oppression, personal dignity in the face of ultimate destruction, and right beaten to ground by actual numerical, and assumed racial, superiority. Hair deserves to be honored for his detective work and meticulous research as well as his ability to make about two hundred pages do the work of some who would have said the same thing, and less eloquently, in six hundred. He should also be commended for refusing to let anything but historical facts and sound reasoning fill in the blank spaces in his history because the temptation to make assumptions in order to flesh out Charles' story must have been a consideration during the writing of the book. This is a small, well-written, rewarding examination of a historical figure and the times that he lived and died in. It's surprising to me that no one has made a movie based upon the book since it has all the drama, suspense, tension, tragedy, and action anyone could possibly hope for regarding a historical figure whose pledge to live and die like a man was a sacred vow and, perhaps, a moral lesson. For those who are aware of Robert F. Williams' place in Afro-American history, Robert Charles will be recognized both as of his time and ahead of it, helping to lay a foundation for the future struggles of others. Considering the fact that Hair first published this book in the late 1970s or very early 1980s, I am amazed that there are so few reviewers of it. I fervently hope that the lack of reviews is not an indication of a lack of readers for this important historical work.

William Ivy Hair in this fast-paced, readable book accomplishes more in a couple of hundred pages than many of our more ponderous historians have aimed to achieve in far-bulkier works. If future historians learn to write and marshall their facts as well as Hair does here, the tales of our past will remain vivid and important to young readers of the future.

Hair's deeply insightful story of one man driven to take the most desperate of measures in New Orleans at the turn of the Century (1900) will keep you home and the TV off. Sit back, fasten your seatbelt and go back to Mississippi after the Civil War. It's a tough place to visit, you sure would not want to live there. Eianr E. Kvaran

A must read

It is a great book. I recommend it to anyone studying history of the southern United States or just U.S. history.

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