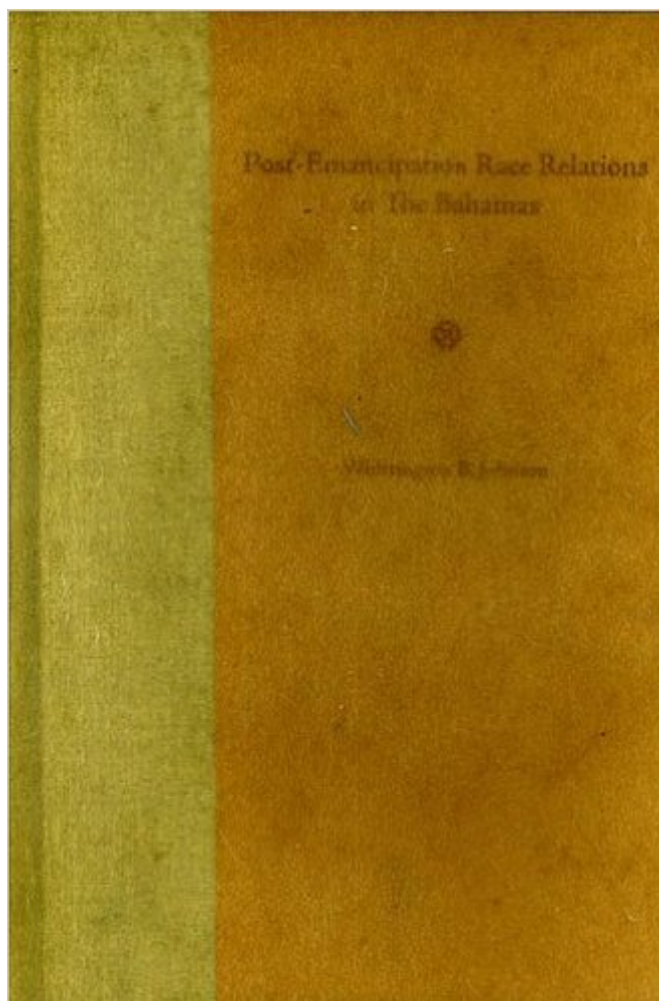


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Post-Emancipation Race Relations In The Bahamas



Synopsis

Johnson examines the formative years of post-slavery Bahamas, when the islands' nonwhite majority began to adjust to their new status as subjects of the British Crown. This is the first book to contrast Bahamians' newfound freedom with that of emancipated slaves in the American South. The author argues that because the Bahamian abolition movement sought only to free the slaves "not to promote social equality and democracy" freed Bahamians were able to move beyond the slave experience to life in a free but still white-dominated and prejudicial society. Moreover, they suffered none of the violence, segregation, and discriminatory laws that African Americans encountered. The most striking feature about the Bahamas' post-emancipation years was how quickly society forgot that a majority of its people had been slaves, as if Bahamians suffered from a collective case of selective amnesia after Emancipation Day, August 1, 1834. No longer identified as black or people of color, freed nonwhites embraced their new identity without forsaking their African heritage. Yet in the United States, almost 140 years after the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, many African Americans continue to be acutely aware and resentful of their slave roots. In studying the islands' politics, economy, social organizations, education, religion, and criminal justice system, the author explores whether nonwhites used their majority in the electorate to gain control of the British colony after it became a free society, whether whites sought to use force to maintain control of the islands, and whether whites tried to emigrate from the Bahamas. He also analyzes the role that the islands' racial classification system "which stresses ethnicity over skin color" played in post-slavery society.

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