



Ensuring Inequality: The Structural Transformation of the African-American Family, Revised Edition

Donna L. Franklin, Angela D. James

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There is a crisis today in the American family, and this crisis has been particularly severe in the African American community. Black women and men are more likely than ever to remain single, and as a result, a staggering number of African-American children are growing up in households that do not include their biological fathers. In this revised edition of an award winning book, Donna L. Franklin and co-author Angela D. James expand and update the nuanced historical perspective used in the first edition to understand African American family patterns. The result is a well-documented narrative that challenges conventional understanding of the continuing plight of African American families. Ensuring Inequality traces the evolution of the black family from slavery to the present, showing the cumulative effects of centuries of historical change. Beginning with a richly researched account of the impact of slavery on the black family, the authors point out that slavery not only caused extreme instability and suffering for families, but established a lasting pattern of poverty which made the economic advantages of marriage unattainable for many. Providing sharp critiques of the full range of federal policies, from the Freedmens Bureau during Reconstruction, to contemporary changes in penal and welfare policies, the authors suggest a prominent role of such policy in constructing the circumstances of black family life. The revised edition updates the final chapters of this comprehensive and nuanced study by exploring changes in marriage patterns over time. It also provides an expanded consideration of the impact on the urban poor of the massive changes in the economy in the recent past and of mass incarceration. The authors demonstrate how each of these changes has operated to dramatically reduce the marriage options of men and women in urban communities. Exhaustively researched and insightfully written, Ensuring Inequality continues to make an important contribution.

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