

Provenance, Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists

Volume 41
Number 1 *A Reviews Mini-Issue*

Article 9

12-31-2025

Review: The Humanity Archive: Recovering the Soul of Black History from a Whitewashed American Myth

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Recommended Citation

Radical, shady PhD, "Review: The Humanity Archive: Recovering the Soul of Black History from a Whitewashed American Myth," *Provenance, Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists* 41 no. 1 (2025) . Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/provenance/vol41/iss1/9>

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Review: *The Humanity Archive: Recovering the Soul of Black History from a Whitewashed American Myth*. By Jermaine Fowler. (New Egypt, NJ: Row House Publishing, 2025), 448 pp.

Jermaine Fowler is a writer and podcaster. *The Humanity Archive: Recovering the Soul of Black History from a Whitewashed American Myth* started as a podcast of the same name in 2020 to share overlooked stories in the lives of African Americans and American history. Fowler presents an interesting quandary by conceptually positioning the archive in relation to humanity.

The book is broken into four parts and sixteen chapters with a bonus chapter published in 2024 as an exclusive to the paperback edition. In 366 pages, Fowler wants you to understand: "(1) How Black history has been whitewashed, (2) How to make connections between past, present, and future, and (3) The important role Black people have played in human history." (xix)

While Fowler seeks to uncover untold truths, he casually acknowledges all the books and scholarly sources he used to write this book. The lack of in-text citations, the infusion of personal experiences, and his writing style make it easy to read. In Chapters 1 through 4, Fowler grounds his claim of a Whitewashed History by looking at how important historical events led by African-descended people have been left out of the official record and how the U.S. education system has been used as a tool of indoctrination. Fowler recognizes his predecessors who have self-published Black history in the face of this racism and prejudice, such as William C. Nell, W.C. Pennington, William Wells Brown, George Washington Williams, Anna Julia Cooper, DuBois, Lerone Bennett Jr., Cheikh Anta Diop, and Henry Louis Gates Jr., to name only a few.

Chapters 5, 6, and 8 focus on Slavery, The Transatlantic and East African Slave Trades, the African Diaspora, early American exploration, and Black Culture. With specific examples of destruction to African empires like the pillage of Benin City; the assertion of race and European DNA in Ancient Egypt's intellectual advancement; and the simultaneous lack of intellectual inquiry into Nubia, the author demonstrates the culturally, socially, and historically significant contributions Africans and Blacks have made to Humanity and how that has been preserved through oral histories and

storytelling. In chapter 7, "Appropriate(d) Culture", Fowler explains the relationship between blackness and commerce, as well as defines Black culture. With small detours into music and dance, Fowler presents the tension between how Africa's cultural and spiritual activities were commodified and commercialized by colonists, imperialists and capitalists, while also continuing to be used to survive by the people. He quotes Pearl Primus, "The Dance is Strong Magic" and "The Dance is a Spirit."

Chapters 14 and 15 uplift stories of Black excellence, Black power, and Black agency through the creative work of Madam C.J. Walker and Zora Neale Hurston, the politics of Shirley Chisholm and David Walker, as well as on the streets of Atlanta, Newark, Detroit, and D.C. The last chapter of the original text, chapter 16, "The Crossroads of History," reflects on Reaganomics and Donald Trump's re-use of Ronald Reagan's slogan of "Let's Make America Great Again" today. However, with the recent re-election of Trump since this book's release, Fowler's re-analysis of our contemporary moment in terms of humanity and the archive is necessary.

Chapter 17, "The Biggest Lies in American History," lists the author's top twenty proclaimed myths about America to destabilize assumptions about people, this place, and this culture. Students of Black Studies, Resistance Studies, and International Studies would be interested in this book, as well as students and professors of the Social Justice Archives program in the School of Library and Information Studies at The University of Alabama and other similar programs. Professional archivists and memory workers can also use this as a resource for advocating for preserving at-risk materials and memories.

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