



Lift Every Voice: Turning a Civil Rights Setback into a New Vision of Social Justice

Lani Guinier

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In 1993, shortly after his inauguration, new President Bill Clinton nominated his old friend and classmate Lani Guinier to the prestigious and crucial post of Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights.

That nomination sparked an immediate firestorm of criticism from the right, labeling Professor Guinier the "Quota Queen" and assailing her for the ideas expressed in her publications, most of which her opponents had not read, or had taken out of context and misunderstood.

In the face of this concerted opposition -- what one friend of Guinier's called "a low-tech lynching" -- Clinton backed down, not only withdrawing her nomination, but having refused throughout to give her an opportunity to speak out in her own defense (and his). The result was a civil rights setback of monumental proportions.

Now, in this remarkable and important book, at once a memoir and insider's account of what really happened behind the closed doors of the Oval Office, the Justice Department, and the U.S. Senate, and an insightful look at the past, present, and future of civil rights in America, Lani Guinier at last breaks her silence.

Unsparring of her own mistakes and shrewdly perceptive about the overt and hidden agendas of those who opposed her, Professor Guinier shows how the president promptly abandoned his ambitious agenda for civil rights at the first hint of criticism from the media and Congress -- and how the civil rights movement suffered a major setback as a result.

More important, this book, in Professor Guinier's own words, is about "the battles fought in the belief that our racial history and our commitment to equality and democracy are essential parts of the same story. It has not always been a pretty story, nor one that follows an inevitable path.

"This book is not, however, an effort to settle scores. It's a story of the efforts of men and women who believe fundamentally in the promise of the American creed and who act on that belief in their everyday lives.

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