



Williamson-Lott, J. A. (2018). *Jim Crow campus: Higher education and the struggle for a new southern social order*. Teachers College Press.

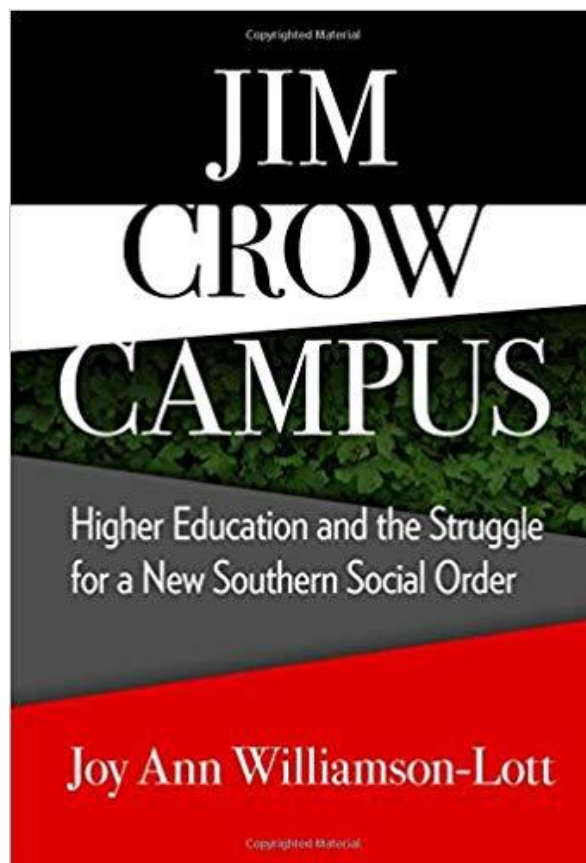
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African-Americans have experienced informal and formal racism throughout the United States since its founding. Quite frequently, education and educational institutions were arenas for both the imposition of and challenges to these policies and practices. In *Jim Crow Campus: Higher Education and the Struggle for a New Southern Social Order*, Joy Ann Williamson-Lott argues that Southern campuses existed in a region with a history of hostility toward mass education, a poor record of public funding for education, and a two-tiered system that separated black institutions from white ones (p. 7). Both systems, from primary to graduate school, were underfunded and underdeveloped in comparison with their counterparts elsewhere in the nation.

In a brief but well-researched narrative of 124 pages with 28 pages of notes, Williamson-Lott shows how struggles between students, faculty, presidents, trustees, and elected officials over black student rights, the Vietnam War, and the emerging knowledge economy during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s “precipitated wide-ranging changes in southern higher education and southern society” (p. 1). The identification of the importance of the knowledge economy in



changing southern higher education and the southern social order is a significant contribution of *Jim Crow Campus*. The value of the same rules for all that are integral to knowledge development is antithetical to the value of different rules for whites and blacks inherent in white supremacist ideology. If southern states and southern institutions of higher education wished to get a share of the funding available through the federal government and foundations, they had to accept the policies and regulations that accompanied those funds. A recent potential use of federal funds to influence higher education institutions is President Trump's threat that the federal government should look at the funds provided to colleges and universities that are not open to speakers on the extreme ideological right.

To limit her scope, Williamson-Lott defines "Southern" colleges and universities as those in the 11 states accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS): Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Membership in SACS and in other regional accrediting agencies is "voluntary." However, without regional accreditation, institutions are exposed to loss of federal funds, denial of credits by other colleges and licensing agencies, and possible loss of state licensure, among other sanctions. To account for the diversity among institutions, Williamson-Lott examines types of institution, (e.g., black and white, private and public) in different locations and with different reputations. Throughout the book, the reader is provided details of specific recorded infringements of faculty and student rights at specific institutions. These illustrations demonstrate that reactions to changes such as the emerging knowledge economy and the black freedom struggle were not uniform across southern institutions.

A particularly useful conceptualization of the diversity within the south is between "peripheral" Southern states such as

Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Arkansas and "deep" Southern states such as Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. For example, peripheral states were much quicker to implement post-Brown decisions regarding desegregation of colleges and universities than were deep states. A number of white elite institutions and public universities struck racist language from their charters and, reluctantly, enrolled a small number of black students. According to the author, "Public officials in the Deep South and trustees at smaller white private institutions vowed to hold the line against what they believed to be federal encroachment" (p. 26). Rather than "believed to be," it might have been more accurate to state, "what they argued."

Four chapters (3-6) provide college-specific details of events from 1955-1965 and 1965-1975. The cases presented demonstrate shifts in white student and faculty activism, an acceleration of the anti-Vietnam War movement, a rise of the Black Power movement, and conflicts between students and faculty on the one hand and administrators, trustees, and state officials on the other. State officials, of course, also engaged in well-known conflicts with the federal government (e.g., Governors Faubus and Wallace).

In the late 1950s, both black and white students nationwide began to protest against the concept of *in loco parentis*. In the South, the demand that black students had First Amendment Constitutional rights of freedom of the press and association often set off a reaction that resulted in a backlash. The demand for these rights was a direct attack on the notion of white supremacy and the paternalistic, caste system of the southern social order. The state reactions were strongest at black public institutions where white appointed trustees and officials had little stake in the quality and reputations of the schools. The white counterparts to these institutions were better able to resist state infringement. The ability of private institutions to resist

varied depending on the attitudes of presidents, endowments, and reputation.

It was during this earlier period that the American Association of University Professors censored a number of institutions for their participation in the resistance-to-change campaign “and its use of anticommunist sentiment to quell dissent” (p. 11). This was the period of the conflated red scare and black scare. Once again, responses from different types of institution varied. In some cases, faculty were fired for supporting racial equality, while in others, such actions were protected. However, regardless of the type of college or university, the existence of conflicts over First Amendment rights and academic freedom on campus, “represented cracks in the intellectual edifice of white supremacy” (p. 48). The red scare in the United States experienced ebbs and flows since the 1917 Soviet revolution and probably reached its zenith in the 1950s with McCarthyism, the national security state, and the hearings of the House Un-American Activities Committee. While southern institutions were not different from institutions in other regions in their purges of faculty with the wrong political leaning, “[a]t times, the accusations simply were posturing or were as much a response to the black scare as to the red scare” (p. 49).

As a result of actions such as court decisions, the passing of the 26th Amendment lowering the voting age from 21 to 18, and the end of student Vietnam War draft deferments, the demise of in loco parentis provisions on campus accelerated. This period also saw the establishment of black studies programs and a shift from the rights of students and desegregation to a focus on Black Power. Also, southern campus activists were well aware of events at Berkeley, Columbia, and Wisconsin. Although change was not inevitable, “Institutions moved in fits and starts but most significantly expanded student freedoms by the mid-1970s” (p. 12). Southern campuses became increasingly similar to one

another and to their counterparts throughout the nation.

In sum, for Williamson-Lott, “there was nothing particularly southern about restraints on academic freedom by the 1970s” (p. 120). This was not all positive. Many trustees and administrators at institutions both north and south now employed the rhetoric formerly used in the South to censor faculty and students who were active in the anti-Vietnam War movement.

Williamson-Lott does an outstanding job in documenting and putting into perspective the long and winding road that led from the special southern campus and social order of the mid-1950s to the not-very-special cultures of the mid-1970s. Particularly impressive is the balance between events occurring on individual campuses and events at the state and national levels. Williamson-Lott’s cogent narrative documents the need to reject any view that colleges and universities are “ivory tower” institutions closed to influences from their environment.

Changes made from the 1950s to the 1970s were due to a confluence of forces and the willingness of many groups and individuals, inside and outside of campuses, to engage in struggles with those who wished to maintain the old orders. However, Williamson-Lott makes a convincing argument that while the idealism of students, faculty, and other agents fighting for change should not be diminished, white Southern officials and trustees supported faculty and student freedoms, “when, and only when, they got something out of the compromise, including local and regional prosperity” (p. 122). Politicians and trustees did not experience moral conversions concerning race and the war.

Jim Crow Campus will be of value to students, formal and informal, of Southern Studies, Higher Education, African-American Studies, American History, Social Change, and Law & Society. The book is well-written and

well-documented. Every reader will learn much about Southern colleges and universities in the latter half of the 20th century. From those perspectives, Williamson-Lott has been successful. As for the present and future, I agree with the concluding observations that past victories over academic freedom and faculty autonomy must be sustained. A lesson we should take from witnessing the actions of

the present administration in Washington is that nothing should be taken for granted. My one regret is that Williamson-Lott does not raise the issue of new challenges such as the increasing effect of external funding on academic projects, the growth of careerism, and the increasing reliance on part-time and non-tenured faculty on all American colleges and universities.


About the Reviewer

Mark Oromaner is a sociologist and an independent scholar. He spent more than 35 years as a faculty member, administrator, and researcher in a number of colleges. His major research interests and publications are in the areas of the history and sociology of higher education and the creation, diffusion, and impact of social science knowledge. His most recent reviews concerning higher education have appeared in publications such as *Choice*, *The History Teacher*, *Education Review*, *American Studies Journal*, *Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, and *H-Net Reviews in the Humanities & Social Sciences* (H-Education).



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