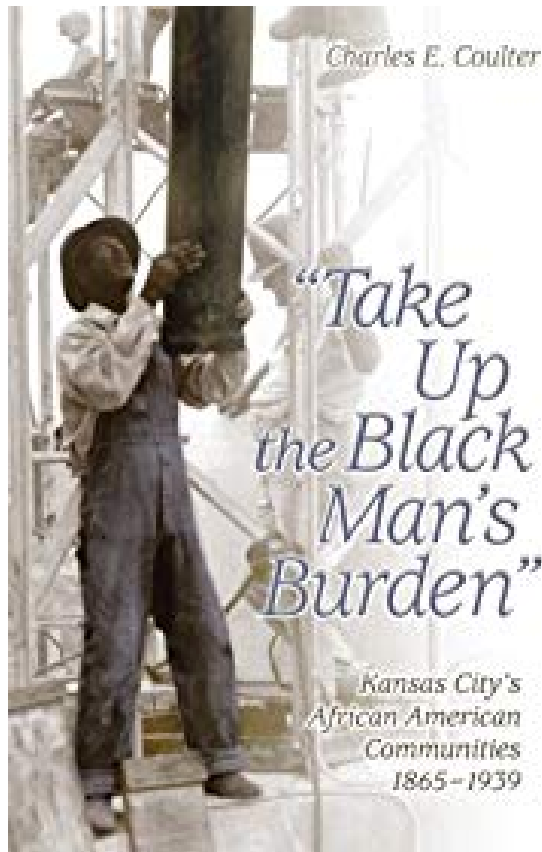


# Take Up the Black Man's Burden: Kansas City's African American Communities, 1865-1939



<b>Pages:</b>	360
<b>Published:</b>	April 1st 2006 by University of Missouri
<b>Genre:</b>	History
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<b>ISBN13:</b>	9780826216496
<b>ISBN10:</b>	0826216498
<b>Goodreads Rating:</b>	3.40
<b>Language</b>	English

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Unlike many cities farther north, Kansas City, Missouri—along with its sister city in Kansas—had a significant African American population by the midnineteenth century and also served as a way station for those migrating north or west. “Take Up the Black Man’s Burden” focuses on the people and institutions that shaped the city’s black communities from the end of the Civil War until the outbreak of World War II, blending rich historical research with first-person accounts that allow participants in this historical drama to tell their own stories of struggle and accomplishment. Charles E. Coulter opens up the world of the African American community in its formative years, making creative use of such sources as census data, black newspapers, and Urban League records. His account covers social interaction, employment, cultural institutions, housing, and everyday lives within the context of Kansas City’s overall development, placing a special emphasis on the years 1919 to 1939 to probe the harsh reality of the Depression for Kansas City blacks—a time when many of the community’s major players also rose to prominence. “Take Up the Black Man’s Burden” is a rich testament not only of high-profile individuals such as publisher Chester A. Franklin, activists Ida M. Becks and Josephine Silone Yates, and state legislator L. Amasa Knox but also of ordinary laborers in the stockyards, domestics in white homes, and railroad porters. It tells how various elements of the population worked together to build schools, churches, social clubs, hospitals, the Paseo YMCA/YWCA, and other institutions that made African American life richer. It also documents the place of jazz and baseball, for which the community was so well known, as well as movie houses, amusement parks, and other forms of leisure. While recognizing that segregation and discrimination shaped their reality, Coulter moves beyond race

relations to emphasize the enabling aspects of African Americans' lives and show how people defined and created their world. As the first extensive treatment of black history in Kansas City, "Take Up the Black Man's Burden" is an exceptional account of minority achievement in America's crossroads. By showing how African Americans saw themselves in their own world, it gives readers a genuine feel for the richness of black life during the interwar years of the twentieth century.