



# Race, Crime, and Policing in the Jim Crow South

African Americans and Law Enforcement in Birmingham, Memphis, and New Orleans, 1920–1945

## BRANDON T. JETT

Throughout the Jim Crow era, southern police departments played a vital role in the maintenance of white supremacy. Police targeted African Americans through an array of actions, including violent interactions, unjust arrests, and the enforcement of segregation laws and customs. Scholars have devoted much attention to law enforcement’s use of aggression and brutality as a means of maintaining African American subordination. While these interpretations are vital to the broader understanding of police and minority relations, Black citizens have often come off as powerless in their encounters with law enforcement. Brandon T. Jett’s *Race, Crime, and Policing in the Jim Crow South*, by contrast, reveals previously unrecognized efforts by African Americans to use, manage, and exploit policing. In the process, Jett exposes a much more complex relationship, suggesting that while violence or the threat of violence shaped police and minority relations, it did not define all interactions.

By examining the myriad ways in which African Americans influenced the police to serve the interests of the Black community, Jett adds a new layer to our understanding of race relations in the urban South in the Jim Crow era and contributes to current debates around the relationship between the police and minorities in the United States.

**BRANDON T. JETT** is professor of history at Florida SouthWestern State College. In 2017, he was awarded a William Nelson Cromwell Foundation Early Career Scholar Fellowship.

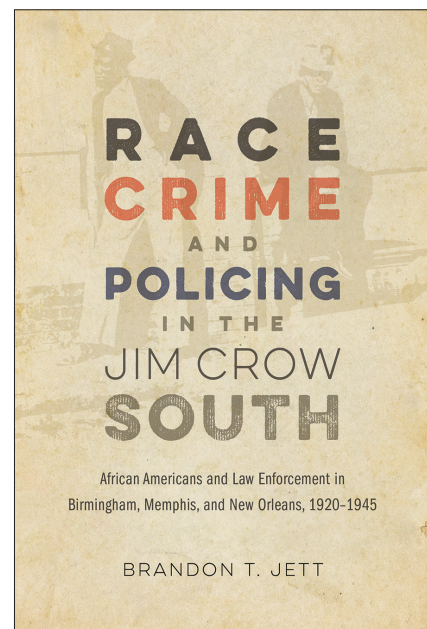
### ADVANCE PRAISE:

“Brandon T. Jett’s book should be required reading for anyone interested in the complex story of race and policing in the United States.”—Anders Walker, author of *The Burning House: Jim Crow and the Making of Modern America*

“Jett vividly illustrates the continuous maltreatment of Blacks by the criminal justice system and how African Americans responded in myriad, and at times unexpected, ways to the expansion of that system. This is important work.”—Dwight Watson, author of *Race and the Houston Police Department, 1930–1990: A Change Did Come*

“This is a remarkably intelligent and well-researched book that will contribute much to our understandings of the history of criminal justice in the South and urban life under Jim Crow.”—Amy L. Wood, coeditor of *Crime and Punishment in the Jim Crow South*

“This is the foundational story of why the Black Lives Matter movement is not just necessary but long overdue.”—Douglas A. Blackmon, author of *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*, winner of the Pulitzer Prize



### JULY 2021

256 pages, 6 x 9, 1 halftone, 26 graphs  
978-0-8071-7507-1

Hardcover \$45.00s, ebook available  
Southern Studies / Criminology



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