



## Black Like Me

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### The Work

One of the books referred to as the “dirty thirty” by a number of scholars, *Black Like Me* has ranked among the thirty books most frequently attacked after 1965. It was one of eleven on the list that dealt with non-Anglo-Saxon whites. The Southern racial climate of the 1950’s and the 1960’s Civil Rights movement tended to indicate to many that censorship of these eleven books was based on racial motivations.

Griffin’s initial intention in writing *Black Like Me* was simply to research the conditions of African Americans in the South. After he began, however, he realized that to get inside the “skin” of an African American and to experience their suffering, he had to become one. He then artificially changed his skin coloring to brown and traveled through the South as a black man. His book recounts his treatment at the hands of both white and black people.

Criticized as not reflecting a true portrait of Southern society, *Black Like Me* was also praised by supporters as having removed the pretensions that existed in America. In 1966 a renewed attack was made on the publication of a paperback edition, which was deemed unfit for children.

### Additional Information

In 1959—the same year that Griffin undertook his masquerade—Stetson Kennedy, another southern journalist, published *Jim Crow Guide to the USA: The Laws, Customs, and Etiquette Governing the Conduct of Nonwhites and Other Minorities as Second-Class Citizens*. This book (available in reprint editions) catalogs all the discriminatory laws that the Civil Rights movement worked to overcome during the 1960’s.

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