[E-BOOK] Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City

Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City

Marilynn S. Johnson
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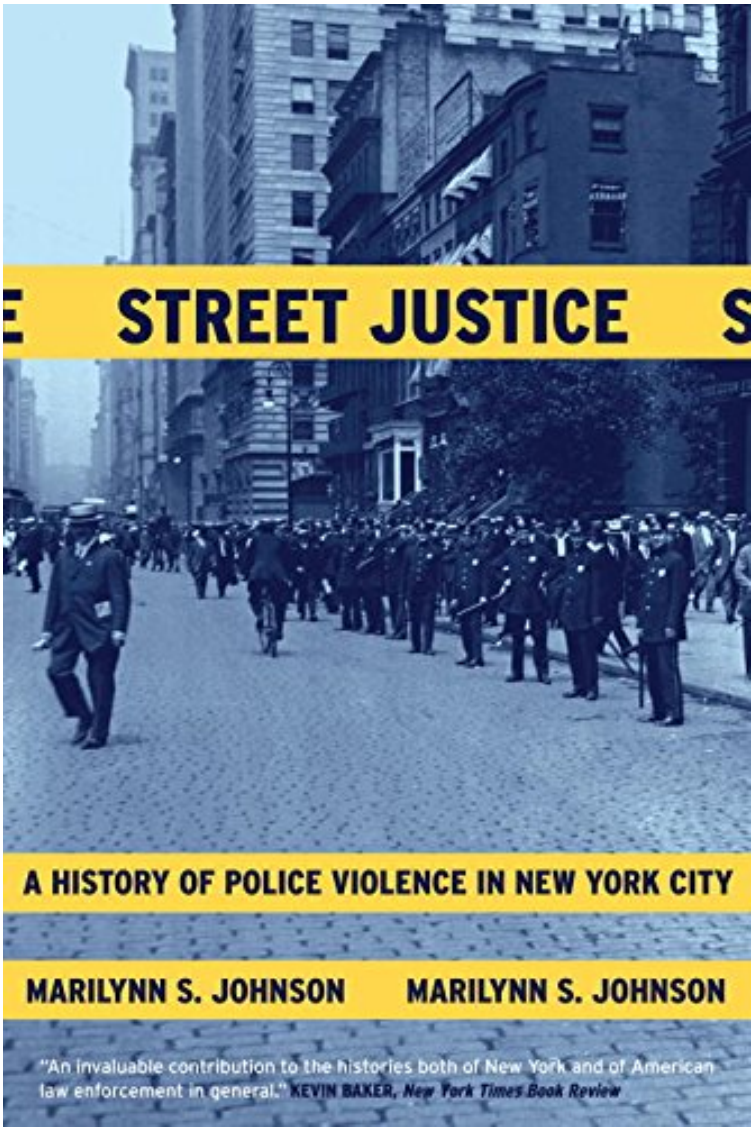

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Marilynn S. Johnson : Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I love teaching this bookBy emteaching this in my junior-level history of crime and punishment college course and have enjoyed the provocative discussions we've had about it--students who are pro-police finds that it encourages them to cultivate more nuanced views. hard to find a book that is

more relevant to contemporary discussions about police brutality.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must readBy MissmouseGloriously insightful book. Incredibly relevant to today's issues.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Disturbing but Revealing StudyBy Rocco DormarunnoA superficial reading of Marilyn Johnson's "Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City" may lead one to think that the NYPD is nothing but an army of belligerent, even sadistic, thugs hell-bent on maintaining the status quo and keeping immigrant groups, Communists, minorities and the working class down. Nothing could be further from the truth.Pay close attentiont to the subtitle of the book: Johnson is only narrowing her study to this particular part--police violence--of the NYPD's history from its inception until the aftermath of 9/11/01. And, as she makes very clear at the start, the NYPD is far from the worst offender, when it comes to police violence: "Compared with police agencies in Los Angeles, Chicago, and Miami, for example, New York has not been an especially abusive department... New York has historically been the epicenter of antibrutality organizing." And while the police do not come off as innocent, especially when it comes to race relations, random violence, the "third degree" or class animosities, Johnson takes great pains to impart to readers that these problems are endemic of a larger issue. Time and again she reminds the reader, as she does toward the end of the book, that ever-shifting political tensions, public policy and backroom infighting made it nearly impossible for the NYPD to react in a consistent and predictable manner.The various examples of police violence are both infuriating and saddening. However, Johnson is quick to reveal the frustrations of the NYPD's desire to maintain law and order in the face of often hostile criminals and organizations. After all, how does a police force "restrain" itself without appearing weak and ineffective? By the end of the book, one is left disturbed by these frequent and vicious outbursts of violence by the police that continue to this day. And, yet, proud that New York has been on the front line of addressing this issue again and again.This is a well-researched and documented study (although I was a bit mortified to see Herbert Asbury's "The Gangs of New York" used as a reference on one or two occasions). Some excellent companion pieces for specific periods covered by this book are Island of Vice: Theodore Roosevelt's Quest to Clean Up Sin-Loving New York and Thai Jones' "More Powerful Than Dynamite."The used hardcover product also receives a full five stars, and 's sellers delivered the book on-time.

Street Justice traces the stunning history of police brutality in New York City, and the antibrutality movements that sought to eradicate it, from just after the Civil War through the present. New York's experience with police brutality dates back to the founding of the force and has shown itself in various forms ever since: From late-nineteenth-century "clubbing"-the routine bludgeoning of citizens by patrolmen with nightsticks-to the emergence of the "third degree," made notorious by gangster movies, from the violent mass-action policing of political dissidents during periods of social unrest, such as the 1930s and 1960s, to the tumultuous days following September 11.Yet throughout this varied history, the victims of police violence have remained remarkably similar: they have been predominantly poor and working class, and more often than not they have been minorities. Johnson compellingly argues that the culture of policing will only be changed when enough sustained political pressure and farsighted thinking about law enforcement is brought to bear on the problem.

From Publishers WeeklyThis fascinating, highly detailed historical survey, beginning with the NYPD's founding in 1845, reads like a true crime page-turner. Covering the horrifying examples of brutality from "clubbing" in the late 19th century-"the routine bludgeoning of citizens by patrolmen armed with nightsticks or blackjacks,"-to the backroom torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in 1997, as well as reviewing the numerous citizen and governmental attempts to curb police violence, Johnson (The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II) definitively supports her main argument: "Police brutality is not a timeless, static phenomenon, nor has there been a linear progression toward more professional, less violent police behavior." Throughout, she provides a sensitive and insightful look at the range of social, political and economic changes that have affected how police brutality has been repeatedly redefined, and she illuminates key historic eras, such as her explanation of how the common abuse of Jews and African-Americans in the 1910s "laid the groundwork for the black-Jewish alliance" of the '30s and '40s. She also deftly provides numerous explanations of interesting facts related to police behavior, such as how the interrogation term "the third degree" was derived from the grueling initiation rites of 19th-century Freemasonry. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. 'Johnson . . . has taken on a formidable and sensitive subject and has largely conquered it, thanks to indefatigable research and a rigorous, unblinking analysis . . . a well-written, intelligent and at times even colorful examination of one of the perennial problems of urban life . . . an invaluable contribution to the histories both of New York and of American law enforcement in general.' -Kevin Baker, New York Times Book 'A masterfully crafted chronicle . . . The pages are sprinkled with fascinating episodes and anecdotes, uncovering the 'story behind the story' for such police practices as 'the third degree' and 'sweatboxes." -James Alan Fox, Boston Globe'This fascinating, highly detailed historical survey, beginning with the NYPD's founding in 1845, reads like a true-crime page-turner . . . [Johnson] provides a sensitive and insightful look at the range of social, political and economic changes that have affected how police brutality has been repeatedly redefined.' -Publishers Weekly"Street Justice gives the reader pause to seriously reconsider the caliber of many of the people who've worn badges and

carried guns on our streets." New York ResidentAbout the AuthorMarilynn S. Johnson is associate professor of history at Boston College and the author of The Second Gold Rush: Oakland and the East Bay in World War II.