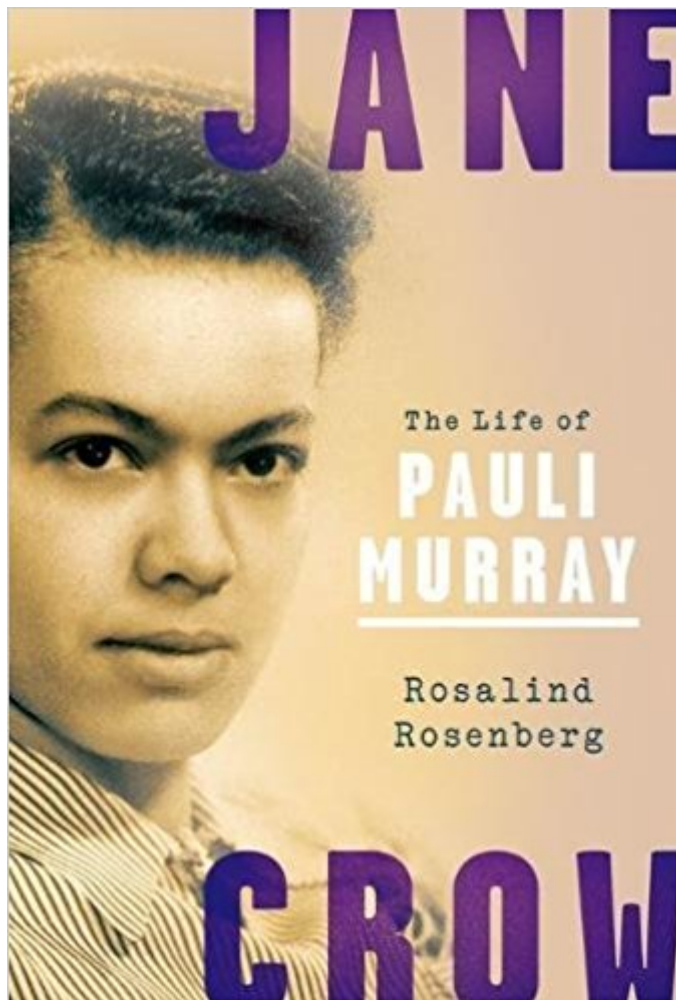


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# Jane Crow: The Life Of Pauli Murray



## Synopsis

Throughout her prodigious life, activist and lawyer Pauli Murray systematically fought against all arbitrary distinctions in society, channeling her outrage at the discrimination she faced to make America a more democratic country. In this definitive biography, Rosalind Rosenberg offers a poignant portrait of a figure who played pivotal roles in both the modern civil rights and women's movements. A mixed-race orphan, Murray grew up in segregated North Carolina before escaping to New York, where she attended Hunter College and became a labor activist in the 1930s. When she applied to graduate school at the University of North Carolina, where her white great-great-grandfather had been a trustee, she was rejected because of her race. She went on to graduate first in her class at Howard Law School, only to be rejected for graduate study again at Harvard University this time on account of her sex. Undaunted, Murray forged a singular career in the law. In the 1950s, her legal scholarship helped Thurgood Marshall challenge segregation head-on in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* case. When appointed by Eleanor Roosevelt to the President's Commission on the Status of Women in 1962, she advanced the idea of Jane Crow, arguing that the same reasons used to condemn race discrimination could be used to battle gender discrimination. In 1965, she became the first African American to earn a JSD from Yale Law School and the following year persuaded Betty Friedan to found an NAACP for women, which became NOW. In the early 1970s, Murray provided Ruth Bader Ginsburg with the argument Ginsburg used to persuade the Supreme Court that the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution protects not only blacks but also women - and potentially other minority groups - from discrimination. By that time, Murray was a tenured history professor at Brandeis, a position she left to become the first black woman ordained a priest by the Episcopal Church in 1976. Murray accomplished all this while struggling with issues of identity. She believed from childhood she was male and tried unsuccessfully to persuade doctors to give her testosterone. While she would today be identified as transgender, during her lifetime no social movement existed to support this identity. She ultimately used her private feelings of being "in-between" to publicly contend that identities are not fixed, an idea that has powered campaigns for equal rights in the United States for the past half-century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Rosenberg offers a compelling look at a complicated woman."--Booklist, Starred Review "A cradle-to-grave account about one of the most interesting, accomplished, and controversial figures in 20th-century America who is far too little known... Assiduous research and clear prose give [Pauli] Murray her due."--Kirkus "Placing Murray in historical context with practiced ease, Rosenberg weaves these many threads together into an authoritative narrative that will introduce Murray to many future generations."--Publishers Weekly, Starred Review "Rosenberg tells Murray's story as she lived it but also casts a well-informed, modern eye on the intersections and omissions within that life. Her striking interpretive work clearly shows what Murray herself suspected: that everything Murray did was 'part of history ... an instrument for achieving things.'"--Foreword Reviews "A fascinating look at the incredible life of Pauli Murray, a mixed-race, transgender scholar, lawyer, activist, priest, and trailblazer who played a pivotal role in the civil rights and women's movements of the 20th century."--The Advocate "A splendid definitive biography... This thorough investigation into Murray's life is fascinating, as the author traces the intersection among gender, race, and politics."--Library Journal, Starred Review "Historical figures aren't human flotsam, swirling into public awareness at random intervals. Instead, they are almost always borne back to us on the current of our own times. In Murray's case, it's not simply that her public struggles on behalf of women, minorities, and the working class suddenly seem more relevant than ever. It's that her private struggles--documented for the first time in all their fullness by Rosenberg--have recently become our public ones."--New Yorker "A compelling read from start to finish... Like all the best biographies, this is more than just the story of a single figure. It is the story of America, told through the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality that have come to define it... Rosenberg's Jane Crow makes not only an important contribution to the fields of Black, feminist, and trans history, but also offers us the timely reminder that, as Murray herself once wrote, 'one person and a typewriter

make a movement."--Lambda Literary "A fresh perspective on this crucial slice of history."--Gay & Lesbian Review

Rosalind Rosenberg is Professor of History Emerita at Barnard College, Columbia University. She is the author of *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century*, *Changing the Subject: How the Women of Columbia Shaped the Way We Think About Sex and Politics*, and *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism*.

I have read thousand of books in my life time and this is one of the BEST I've every read! It's an inspirational story of a woman born before her time who achieved dramatic things in her life time given the disadvantages she was born with. Even being left-handed was a disadvantage for her!! was first introduced to Pauli when I read Blanche Weisen Cook's brilliant trilogy of Eleanor Roosevelt and and when I read Susan Quinn's "Eleanor and Hick". If you relish inspirational stories about women who overcome overwhelming odds, this book is for you. And, it doesn't hurt that it's extremely well written.

This thoroughly researched, impeccably crafted important biography of the amazing Pauli Murray kept me on the edge of my seat. Why did I not know about this poet, civil rights activist, lawyer, and Episcopal priest? The history so carefully explained here helped me understand my mother's political activism.

Why have we never heard of her? Her impact on this world is incredible and we all benefit today from what she accomplished. Do yourself a favor and read this or any book about her. You cannot help but be thankful that you did.

Book was Ok

An amazng story about an amazing woman in a challenging time.

This historical biography by Professor Rosenberg is first-rate from beginning to end

Pauli Murray is the person that coined the term *labeled as "Jane Crow"*, and was the first to legally address the twin oppressions of color and gender. I had seen her name

mentioned in many places, but this is the first time I've read her story. Thank you to Net Galley and Oxford University Press for the opportunity to read it free in exchange for this honest review. This biography is for sale now. Murray was born in North Carolina and was a labor activist during the turbulent 1930s. She was academically gifted and hardworking, but tormented by the issue of gender. 100 years ago, in the time and place into which fate dropped her, there was no recognition of trans people, and so her sense of herself (the pronoun she used) was that surely there was some unseen physical aspect to her body that must be male. She searched high and low for a surgeon that would perform exploratory surgery to discover whether she had an undescended testicle or some other material explanation to explain why she was convinced that she was actually male. It hurts to think about it. Those born after the early-to-mid-20th century cannot comprehend how the suggestion that gender could be binary was seen, and Murray was a devout Christian as well, and became an ordained Episcopal priest. By the time trans people gained respect from a significant percentage of Americans, Murray was no longer here. Despite the misery and confusion that was inherent in such a life, Murray was prolific. She was declined a place at the University of North Carolina because of her race, and later denied a place at Harvard Law because of her gender. She graduated at the top of her class at Howard Law, the only woman in her class. Later she would be largely responsible for inclusion of the word "gender" in the title VII in 1964. Those of us that have benefited from that law and there are a lot of us tip our hats to her memory in gratitude. Rosenberg has done a fine job in telling us about Murray. Her documentation is flawless and her narrative clear. At times particularly in the beginning, before Murray's career really catches fire, it's a trifle dry, but I would prefer a clear, scholarly, linear narrative such as this one, over an exciting but sensationalized, less well documented telling any day of the week. Those interested in the American Civil Rights movement and the history of the women's rights movement in the USA should get this book and read it. Even if used primarily as a reference tool, it's an indispensable resource, particularly to those with an interest in legal matters relating to discrimination and equity.

An engaging and eye-opening profile of a fascinating person. I am glad to have found this book!

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