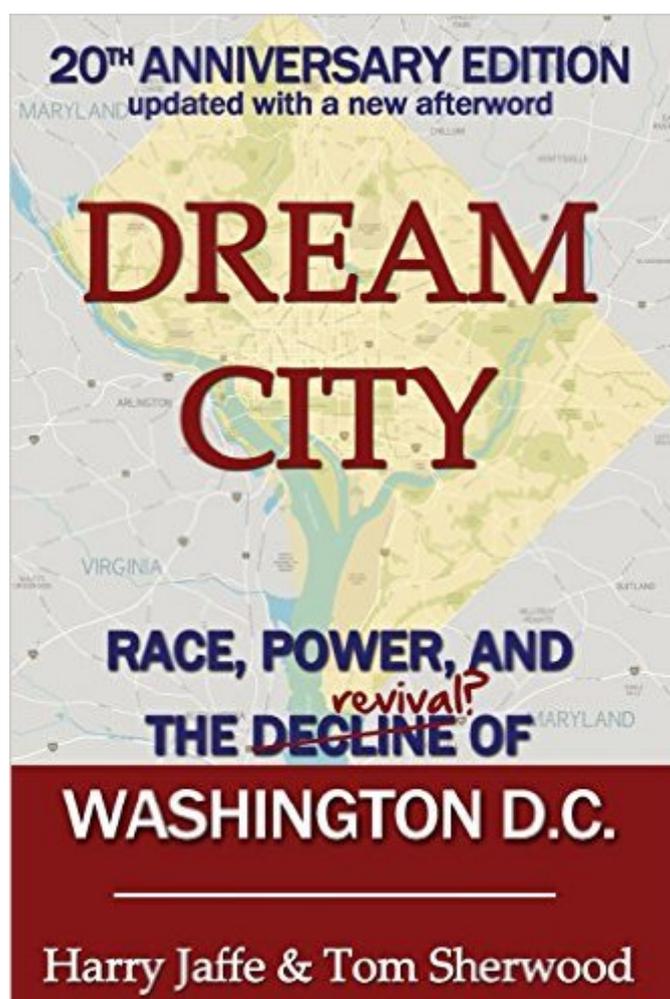


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# Dream City: Race, Power, And The Decline Of Washington, D.C.



## Synopsis

With a new afterword covering the two decades since its first publication, two of Washington, D.C.'s most respected journalists expose one of America's most tragic ironies: how the nation's capital, often a gleaming symbol of peace and hope, is the setting for vicious contradictions and devastating conflicts over race, class, and power. Jaffe and Sherwood have chillingly chronicled the descent of the District of Columbia—congressional hearings, gangland murders, the establishment of home rule and the inside story of Marion Barry's enigmatic dynasty and disgrace. Now their afterword narrates the District's transformation in the last twenty years. New residents have helped bring developments, restaurants, and businesses to reviving neighborhoods. The authors cover the rise and fall of Mayors Adrian Fenty and Vince Gray, how new corruption charges are taking down politicians and businessmen, and how a fading Barry is still a player. The city behind the monuments remains flawed and polarized, but its revival is turning it into a distinct world capital—almost a dream city.

Harry Jaffe has been a national editor at *The Washingtonian* magazine since 1990. He has received a number of awards for investigative journalism and feature writing from the Society of Professional Journalists. He has taught journalism at Georgetown University and American University. His work has appeared in *Esquire*, *Regardie's*, *Outside*, *Philadelphia Magazine*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *The Washington Post*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Chicago Tribune*, and other newspapers. Jaffe was born and raised in Philadelphia and began his journalism career with the *Rutland (Vermont) Herald*. He is the co-author of *Dream City: Race, Power and the Decline of Washington, D.C.* He lives in Clarke County, Virginia, and Washington, D.C., with his wife and daughters.

Tom Sherwood is a reporter for NBC4 in Washington, specializing in politics and the District of Columbia government. Tom also is a commentator for WAMU 88.5 public radio and a columnist for the *Current Newspapers*. Tom has twice been honored as one of the Top 50 Journalists in Washington by *Washingtonian* magazine. He began his journalism career at *The Atlanta Constitution* and covered local and national politics for *The Washington Post* from 1979 to 1989. He is the co-author of *Dream City: Race, Power and the Decline of Washington, D.C.* A native of Atlanta, he currently resides in Washington, D.C. and has one son, Peyton.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This fascinating book about the current state and recent history of our nation's capital focuses largely on the story of Marion Barry, who was, when the book was written, both a once and future mayor of the city. How much blame Barry must shoulder for the city's social and economic problems is a question that remains to be answered, but the detail provided by the authors, both journalists with long experience of the city and its politics, offers fascinating glimpses into the reality behind the mask. One story alone is worth the price of the book: Marion Barry, who has long tried to identify with the city's most downtrodden, at one time (when he first went into politics) hired an exconvict to teach him how to 'talk street' so that he wouldn't sound too educated (he has an M.S. in Chemistry and was working on a Ph. D. when he became involved in the civil rights movement - not the Marion Barry I thought I knew). This is a fascinating book. A bit out of date now, but containing material I have not seen anywhere else that helps explain some of the very bad times D.C. has experienced in the last few decades.

Jaffe does an excellent job of recounting the hope and promise that many Washingtonians held when Marion Barry was first elected Mayor as part of an grassroots coalition of low-income blacks, liberal whites and a growing gay and lesbian community and how badly that promise was betrayed. There is no doubt the 80's were an awful time for DC. Crack, violence and economic abandonment by the middle class, nearly killed DC. Most major urban centers faced similar problems thanks to Reaganism and white flight but Jaffe clearly documents Barry's compounding of the problems faced by DC through financial irresponsibility (largely due to patronage) incompetent and criminal staff and his growing personal addictions to drug and sex. He documents Barry's failings without demonizing him or resorting to the disguised racism of many of Barry's detractors. It

should be added that Barry was recently elected back onto City Council, representing the nearly all black and poverty stricken Ward 8. Many outside DC couldn't believe that DC residents would want this guy back on the City Council, but those folks don't know Ward 8 or Barry's appeal. While DC is booming economically, Ward 8 continued to be ignored by the rest of the city and the Mayor. By voting for Barry against a Mayoral ally, Ward 8 was warning the rest of the city that they will not be ignored.

Excellent book. But the publisher must have stuck the print version through some sort of scanner with OCR to turn it into an e-book. Almost every page has typos, often humorous. There are random punctuations, spaces, h's come out as b's, e's are o's, etc. After a while you get use to it, but then you get angry because you suspect the publisher is making money off your purchase and they were too lazy and cheap to proof-read it. The new updated epilogue (written in 2014) is understandably free of mistakes. I complained to and they refunded some of the money, along with a non-committal assurance that they would send me a corrected version at some point in the future. Pretty lame. It definitely makes me think twice about buying older e-books.

This book has a copyright date of 1994, and as someone who moved to the District just after it was published, there were many moments of disconnect when the authors described a version of the city that I moved to that is nothing like the place where I live today. That said, if you love DC or are serious about wanting to understand its political backstory, you have to read this book. When this was published, 14th St was littered with buildings destroyed during or after the 68 riots; they're all razed now, but those 45-year-old ghosts haunt the City Council and and ANCs, and probably will for decades more to come. This is an Important Book, but it's also a very engaging, readable book. You know how the story of young Marion Barry ends, but it's still fascinating to watch each step of his journey of reinvention and rise to power.

As a native Washingtonian ( baby boom generation) I found this book historically interesting. It was on my 'to read' list for a long time. I don't know how interesting this will be if one is not a native of Washington DC. however if you've an interest in the politics of DC and how it got to where it is now, the book is worth the read.

The urban problems of Washington D.C. are laid bare with some wonderful historical perspective. This is a city where the normal municipal politics (race, poverty, patronage) are complicated by the

national politics that weild a veto power over this city. This book easily could have been an unreadable tome, but the authors did a great job of keeping the book moving and putting the characters in proper perspective.

Great read! As a new transplant to DC, this book gave me an understanding of my new city and its political history that explains so much about the current state of things. My favorite bookclub selection of the year!

In addition to telling a riveting tale about the rise and fall (and rise) of a fascinating and masterful politician (Marion Barry), the book is an amazing tour of the District of Columbia during the 60s, 70s, and 80s. A must-read for anyone who loves DC and/or is interested in its peculiar political history.

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