



Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race and the Cold War (Cold War International History Project)

By Nancy Mitchell

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In the mid-1970s, the Cold War had frozen into a nuclear stalemate in Europe and retreated from the headlines in Asia. As Gerald Ford and Jimmy Carter fought for the presidency in late 1976, the superpower struggle overseas seemed to take a backseat to more contentious domestic issues of race relations and rising unemployment. There was one continent, however, where the Cold War was on the point of flaring hot: Africa. *Jimmy Carter in Africa* opens just after Henry Kissinger's failed 1975 plot in Angola, as Carter launches his presidential campaign. The Civil Rights Act was only a decade old, and issues of racial justice remained contentious. Racism at home undermined Americans' efforts to "win hearts and minds" abroad and provided potent propaganda to the Kremlin. As President Carter confronted Africa, the essence of American foreign policy—stopping Soviet expansion—slammed up against the most explosive and raw aspect of American domestic politics—racism. Drawing on candid interviews with Carter, as well as key U.S. and foreign diplomats, and on a dazzling array of international archival sources, Nancy Mitchell offers a timely reevaluation of the Carter administration and of the man himself. In the face of two major tests, in Rhodesia and the Horn of Africa, Carter grappled with questions of Cold War competition, domestic politics, personal loyalty, and decision-making style. Mitchell reveals an administration not beset by weakness and indecision, as is too commonly assumed, but rather constrained by Cold War dynamics and by the president's own temperament as he wrestled with a divided public and his own human failings. *Jimmy Carter in Africa* presents a stark portrait of how deeply Cold War politics and racial justice were intertwined.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Mitchell is truly pioneering in her effort to include a multitude of African, Latin American, European and even Australian sources in the story of the diplomacy of this period. She also does an excellent job of integrating within her narrative America's domestic racial politics, and their effects on men like Jimmy Carter and Andrew Young. *Jimmy Carter in Africa* will certainly compel historians to reassess Carter's diplomacy and to recognize both his significant achievements and failures on the African continent." (Thomas Schwartz *Vanderbilt University*)

"Mitchell writes clearly in sweeping away historical judgments she sees as myths, most prominently concerning Jimmy Carter (always a Cold Warrior, in Mitchell's formulation) and his principal advisers. On these questions, her concluding chapter is especially strong. An impressive historical work in every respect." Recommendation: Essential? D. N. Buckaloo, *Choice*

"Your extraordinary research has resulted in a truly definitive account of one of the most challenging and important aspects of my presidency." (Jimmy Carter *Former President of the United States*)

"Nancy Mitchell's *Jimmy Carter in Africa: Race in the Cold War* is a phenomenal addition to the scholarship of the Cold War. Drawing heavily on archival research conducted in the United States, Britain, and South Africa and on documents from Cuba and Zimbabwe, the book presents an in-depth and engaging international history of President Jimmy Carter's foreign policy. Mitchell does a commendable job of providing context, ensuring that the book is readily accessible regardless of a reader's expertise. It is an essential and enjoyable read for any historian interested in the late Cold War or modern Africa." (Benjamin Griffin *H-War*)

"The volume's arguments and overall importance can not only change our views of Jimmy Carter's foreign policies and the domestic and foreign pressures he overcame to formulate those policies, but also force us to rethink critical parts of US relations with Africa amidst the historic racial and civil rights events of the 1970s." (Walter LaFeber *Cornell University*)

"Nancy Mitchell's exhaustive study of Jimmy Carter's Africa policies (1977–1981) is based on a vast array of once classified and other archival material augmented by many interviews with those directly involved, including with the 39th president of the US. The result is a wealth of fresh insights into the complexity and importance of this critical period in Africa's history, and of how Carter's leadership strengths, talents and core values were tested to good effect." (John Stremlau *South African Journal of International Affairs*)

"The Cold War in Africa has received much less attention than the Cold War in Europe and the Middle East, and Nancy Mitchell has made a significant contribution to rectify this. I am sure that *Jimmy Carter in Africa* will become the standard work for the Cold War in Rhodesia and Ethiopia/Somalia in the 1970s. This book is an outstanding achievement." (Klaus Larres *University of North Carolina Chapel Hill*)

"Nancy Mitchell's brilliant book offers a revolutionary view of Jimmy Carter's foreign policy and a pathbreaking examination of the meaning of détente. A true page turner." (Piero Gleijeses *author of Visions of Freedom: Havana, Washington, Pretoria, and the Struggle for Southern Africa, 1976-1991*)

"The research for this book is staggering. It is a model of multiarchival research in many disparate collections in the United States as well as in the archives of numerous other countries. This book will give us a new and much more textured, balanced, and thoughtful portrait of Jimmy Carter as a president and of the foreign policy of his administration." (Melvyn P. Leffler *University of Virginia*)

"*Jimmy Carter in Africa* may not be a summary vindication of a presidency that's rightly criticized as something of a muddle, but it's by a wide margin the best book about that presidency that's yet appeared." (Steve Donoghue *Christian Science Monitor*)

"Mitchell's superb treatment of international maneuvering in Africa in the 1970s delivers the most incisive portrait yet of Carter and other personalities at the top of his administration plus, as a bonus, the best examination to date of Henry Kissinger's discovery of Africa in his last year as secretary of state. An absorbing, important, and entertaining read." (James G. Hershberg *author of Marigold: The Lost Chance for Peace in Vietnam*)

About the Author

Nancy Mitchell is Professor of History at North Carolina State University.

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