



# **In the Shadow of Slavery: African Americans in New York City, 1626-1863 (Historical Studies of Urban America)**

*Leslie M. Harris*

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"The black experience in the antebellum South has been thoroughly documented. But histories set in the North are few. *In the Shadow of Slavery*, then, is a big and ambitious book, one in which insights about race and class in New York City abound. Leslie Harris has masterfully brought more than two centuries of African American history back to life in this illuminating new work."—David Roediger, author of *The Wages of Whiteness*

In 1991 in lower Manhattan, a team of construction workers made an astonishing discovery. Just two blocks from City Hall, under twenty feet of asphalt, concrete, and rubble, lay the remains of an eighteenth-century "Negro Burial Ground." Closed in 1790 and covered over by roads and buildings throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the site turned out to be the largest such find in North America, containing the remains of as many as 20,000 African Americans. The graves revealed to New Yorkers and the nation an aspect of American history long hidden: the vast number of enslaved blacks who labored to create our nation's largest city.

*In the Shadow of Slavery* lays bare this history of African Americans in New York City, starting with the arrival of the first slaves in 1626, moving through the turbulent years before emancipation in 1827, and culminating in one of the most terrifying displays of racism in U.S. history, the New York City Draft Riots of 1863. Drawing on extensive travel accounts, autobiographies, newspapers, literature, and organizational records, Leslie M. Harris extends beyond prior studies of racial discrimination by tracing the undeniable impact of African Americans on class, politics, and community formation and by offering vivid portraits of the lives and aspirations of countless black New Yorkers.

Written with clarity and grace, *In the Shadow of Slavery* is an ambitious new work that will prove indispensable to historians of the African American experience, as well as anyone interested in the history of New York City.

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