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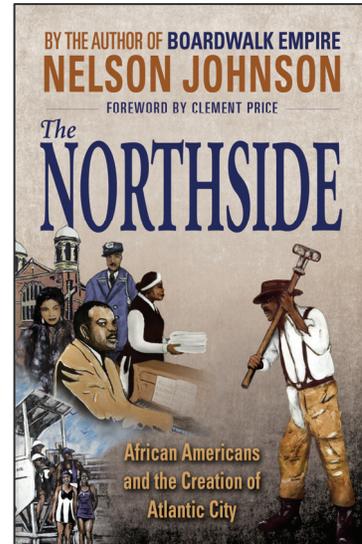
Plexus Publishing, Inc.

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Sequel to *Boardwalk Empire* Is *The Northside: African Americans and the Creation of Atlantic City*

**Nelson Johnson, Whose *New York Times* Bestseller Inspired
HBO's Critically Acclaimed Series, Tells the True Story
of the Seminal Black Community That Built Atlantic City**



November 29, 2010, Medford, NJ—Author Nelson Johnson frequently stopped working on *Boardwalk Empire* to wrestle with how best to handle the thorny subject of race. But he persisted, and the result was a chapter—“A Plantation by the Sea”—that inspired him to delve more deeply into the history of Atlantic City’s black community. Johnson’s new book, *The Northside: African Americans and the Creation of Atlantic City*, was published today by Plexus Publishing, Inc., the small independent publisher behind *Boardwalk Empire*.

“The new ‘city’ that had evolved out of (Jonathan) Pitney’s beach village stands alone in American history,” Johnson said. “The city’s very existence was dependent on money spent by out-of-towners [and] Atlantic City’s solution was unique for its time. The hotel industry reached out to the Upper South and recruited people ... former slaves and their dependents, coaxed to the North during the three generations following the Civil War.” According to Johnson, “African Americans built Atlantic City. Remove them from its history and the town we know today never comes to be.”

In *The Northside*, Johnson presents the untold story of Atlantic City’s black community, from the arrival of the first African Americans to Absecon Island in the early 19th century through the glory days of the “World’s Playground.” Drawing on dozens of interviews and painstaking archival research, he reveals long-forgotten details about the people on whose backs the gambling mecca was built and offers a wide-ranging survey of the accomplishments of more recent generations.

In addition to the rich detail he provides about individual Northside leaders, Johnson explores many of the significant social and political forces, events, and experiences that have impacted Atlantic City and its black citizens. Among them, the building of the railroads, which allowed the creation of America’s first local economy based purely on tourism; the annual cycle of short summer season

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followed by months of painful off-season survival; the critical role of the church in the lives of black residents; the “Summer of Freedom,” when civil rights activists grabbed the media spotlight during the Democratic National Convention; the town’s vibrant entertainment scene—epitomized by hot jazz and lavish musical productions performed in trend-setting (and largely integrated) Kentucky Avenue nightclubs; and the birth and growth of the casino gaming industry with its failed promise to uplift *all* of Atlantic City’s people.

Exploited for their labor and banished to the most undesirable part of town, Johnson’s research shows that resilient Northsiders refused to let racist attitudes limit or define them. Instead, they created their own vibrant city within a city—a place where black culture thrived and young people aspired to become artists, athletes, educators, and leaders of business, politics, and society. Writing in the foreword to *The Northside*, Dr. Clement Price, Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor of History at Rutgers University, said, “Johnson weaves a complicated and persuasive narrative that contributes to our understanding of Atlantic City’s prominence in the aspirations of the black urban experience.”

In addition to Dr. Price’s foreword, *The Northside* includes a prologue, twelve chapters, more than 85 archival photographs (including dozens from private collections published here for the first time), an appendix devoted to Northside leaders, the author’s source notes, selected bibliography, and an exhaustive index. The original illustrations on the dustjacket were created specially for the book by Atlantic City artist and lifelong Northside resident Tyrone L. Hart.

Nelson Johnson, whose family’s presence in Atlantic County predates the founding of Atlantic City, is a lifelong resident of Hammonton, New Jersey. He practiced law for 30 years and was active in Atlantic City and County politics through much of that period. Johnson is the author of *Boardwalk Empire: The Birth, High Times, and Corruption of Atlantic City*, the *New York Times* bestseller that inspired the hit HBO series from executive producer, writer, and creator Terence Winter.

The Northside: African Americans and the Creation of Atlantic City (384 pp/hardcover/\$24.95/ ISBN 978-0-937548-73-8) is represented to the book trade by Parson Weems Publisher Services. It is available in bookstores, through online retailers, and by contacting the publisher at 609/654-6500, by email to info@plexuspublishing.com, or on the web at www.plexuspublishing.com. To view sample chapters and photographs and learn more about the book, visit www.thenorthsidebook.com.

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