



Black Cloud: The Great Florida Hurricane of 1928

Eliot Kleinberg

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In September 1928, when great storms were still unnamed, nearly 700 black men, women, and children were buried in an unmarked West Palm Beach ditch following the nation's second-deadliest hurricane. The savage gusts that churned the waters of Lake Okeechobee into a maelstrom of death afflicted victims of all races and classes, and produced tales of survival and loss among whites and blacks alike. The vast majority of the poststorm workers were poor black migrants; even if the hurricane was color-blind, the recovery and rebuilding effort were not. Palm Beach Post hurricane reporter and Florida native Eliot Kleinberg has penned the gripping tale of the killer hurricane. The storm's journey is chronicled as it kills perhaps 7,000 people along its path from the Caribbean to Canada, including a low official tally of 1,836 in Florida alone. Detailing the storm's track, the failure to properly predict landfall, personal battles against nature's wrath, and the extraordinary suffering of a black citizenry forced to provide a disproportionate amount of rebuilding labor and endure the burial of friends and family in an unmarked pit, Kleinberg tells a powerful story of man versus nature and man versus man.

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