



Shuffling To Ignominy: The Tragedy Of Stepin Fetchit

Champ Clark

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Stepin Fetchit...two words that have entered our language, signifying the ultimate in negative racial stereotype. Between 1927 and 1975, Stepin Fetchit, born Lincoln Perry in 1902, appeared in over 40 films. He was the first Black actor to receive featured credit in a motion picture. He was the first Black actor to sign a long-term contract with a Hollywood studio. He was the first Black actor to drive through the front gates of a Hollywood studio...with a chauffeur at the wheel. He was, in Fetchit's own words, "The first Black actor universally acclaimed a star by the public." This at a time when, "No White man had the idea of making a Negro a star." Stepin Fetchit was indeed the first African-American movie star. How, then, did Stepin Fetchit come to represent all that is bad about race in America? And who was the man behind this mask of a name? Here, author Champ Clark reveals the true facts of Fetchit/Perry's controversial life and career. Going beyond archival material, Clark draws from his conversations with the actor's own family, friends and co-stars. In addition, a newly discovered eight-hour interview allows the real Lincoln Perry to finally speak for himself. Shuffling to Ignominy: The Tragedy of Stepin Fetchit is a troubling tale that reflects D.E.B. DuBois' assertion that, "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." -Sidney Poitier says, "Stepin Fetchit paved the way." -



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