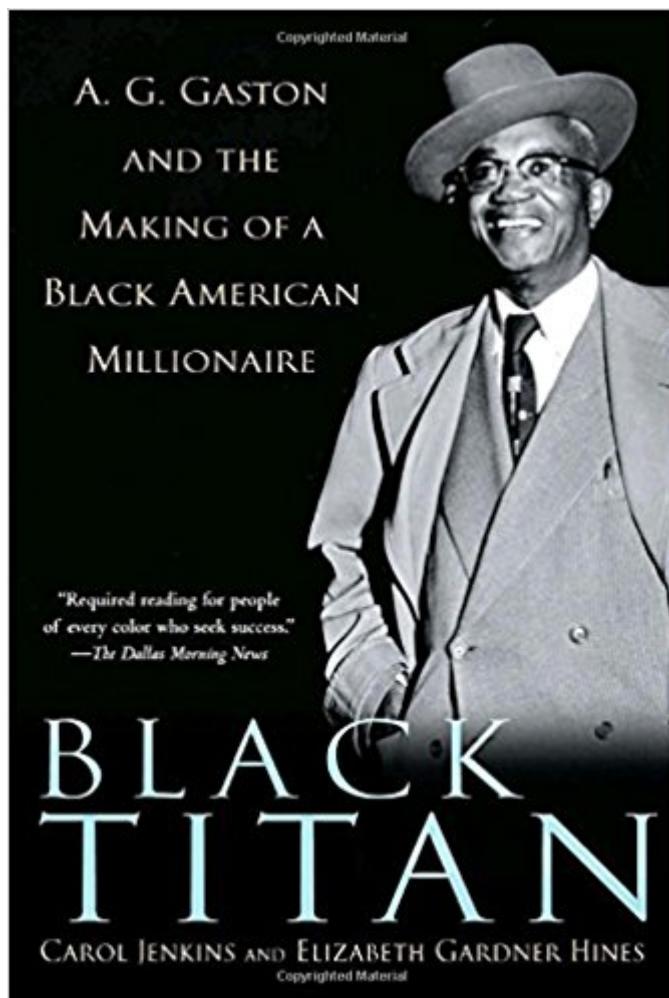


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# Black Titan: A.G. Gaston And The Making Of A Black American Millionaire



## Synopsis

The grandson of slaves, born into poverty in 1892 in the Deep South, A. G. Gaston died more than a century later with a fortune worth well over \$130 million and a business empire spanning communications, real estate, and insurance. Gaston was, by any measure, a heroic figure whose wealth and influence bore comparison to J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie. Here, for the first time, is the story of the life of this extraordinary pioneer, told by his niece and grandniece, the award-winning television journalist Carol Jenkins and her daughter Elizabeth Gardner Hines. Born at a time when the bitter legacy of slavery and Reconstruction still poisoned the lives of black Americans, Gaston was determined to make a difference for himself and his people. His first job, after serving in the celebrated all-black regiment during World War I, bound him to the near-slavery of an Alabama coal mine—but even here Gaston saw not only hope but opportunity. He launched a business selling lunches to fellow miners, soon established a rudimentary bank—and from then on there was no stopping him. A kind of black Horatio Alger, Gaston let a single, powerful question be his guide: What do our people need now? His success flowed from an uncanny genius for knowing the answer. Combining rich family lore with a deep knowledge of American social and economic history, Carol Jenkins and Elizabeth Hines unfold Gaston's success story against the backdrop of a century of crushing racial hatred and bigotry. Gaston not only survived the hardships of being black during the Depression, he flourished, and by the 1950s he was ruling a Birmingham-based business empire. When the movement for civil rights swept through the South in the late 1950s and early 1960s, Gaston provided critical financial support to many activists. At the time of his death in 1996, A. G. Gaston was one of the wealthiest black men in America, if not the wealthiest. But his legacy extended far beyond the monetary. He was a man who had proved it was possible to overcome staggering odds and make a place for himself as a leader, a captain of industry, and a far-sighted philanthropist. Writing with grace and power, Jenkins and Hines bring their distinguished ancestor fully to life in the pages of this book. *Black Titan* is the story of a man who created his own future—and in the process, blazed a future for all black businesspeople in America. From the Hardcover edition.

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## Customer Reviews

Ã¢ "No library of American business achievement is complete without the story of Arthur G. Gaston. . . . Black Titan is a long overdue contribution to the recording of not just black history, but American history.Ã¢ "•EARL G. GRAVES SR. Chairman and CEO, Earl G. Graves Ltd. Founder and Publisher, Black Enterprise magazine Author of How to Succeed in Business Without Being White: Straight Talk on Making It in AmericaÃ¢ "A. G. Gaston was there first. He succeeded when the odds seemed insurmountable. This important book traces his incredible life, from coal miner to millionaire. It is full of lessons for anyone looking to succeed in todayÃ¢ "s business world.Ã¢ "•ROBERT JOHNSON CEO, Black Entertainment Television, Inc.Ã¢ "It was my privilege to meet A. G. Gaston in Birmingham, Alabama, during the early 1970s. I was greatly inspired by his unique entrepreneurial vision and passionate belief in economic self-sufficiency. . . . This book should be read by every entrepreneur.Ã¢ "•BYRON LEWIS Chairman, Uniworld GroupFrom the Hardcover edition.

The grandson of slaves, born into poverty in 1892 in the Deep South, A. G. Gaston died more than a century later with a fortune worth well over \$130 million and a business empire spanning communications, real estate, and insurance. Gaston was, by any measure, a heroic figure whose wealth and influence bore comparison to J. P. Morgan and Andrew Carnegie. Here, for the first time, is the story of the life of this extraordinary pioneer, told by his niece and grandniece, the award-winning television journalist Carol Jenkins and her daughter Elizabeth Gardner Hines. Born at a time when the bitter legacy of slavery and Reconstruction still poisoned the lives of black Americans, Gaston was determined to make a difference for himself and his people. His first job, after serving in the celebrated all-black regiment during World War I, bound him to the near-slavery of an Alabama coal mine?but even here Gaston saw not only hope but opportunity. He launched a

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Interesting bio on A. G. Gaston, a great African-American who promoted economic self-sufficiency and possessed a passionate entrepreneurial spirit. The book is well-written and chronicles Gaston's life early as a child born in Alabama at a time when "lynching" of blacks in America was at its peak, and continues through into adulthood, focusing on his business ventures, marriages and family life, all the while including historical facts of black America during the 1900's. One of the writers is A. G. Gaston's niece, noted author Carol Jenkins, which allows for personal insight into his family life that otherwise may not have been available to the reader. For example, information about his second wife, Minnie Gaston's personal success and her contribution to the black community was especially insightful. Including the realization of Gaston's reluctance to be financially supportive of Minnie's entrepreneurial endeavors. The book depicts "the making of a millionaire: A. G. Gaston," by delving deep into Gaston's everyday life - his struggles, missteps, and success as a [black] businessman. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book about Gaston who, against all odds, becomes successful in his community, which highlights his accomplishments, but also how he empowered others within the community as well. Favorite quote of book: "What I did any man can do - if he has willpower, determination and a plan." To that I add: " Any woman can do!" We need more books about unsung heroes in the African-American community. I highly recommend this book.

Definitely a book that was worth reading and taking lessons from. Really enjoyed it. Great read for Blacks looking to become or currently is an entrepreneur

This was an excellent book! I highly recommend it to anyone wanting to better understand the multifaceted issues of the civil rights era that we still face as a nation from the context of a businessman. The biography of A.G. Gaston is American history that should be shared with every student majoring in business at the very least. I love the wisdom his mother, Rosie, imparted on him to start small which is a great reminder for me. I also liked his philosophy to focus on what you can change. I will keep him and his second wife in my thoughts as I build my business - they were what Andrew Carnegie called the "ultimate mastermind."

Excellent read for those interested in learning how African-Americans survived and thrived despite the odds.

Great story of a remarkable MAN who was able to excel against all odds. Should be required reading for all young Black males. Proof that you "are" who you "think" you are.

The Black Titan was a awesome book. The life story of A. G. Gaston is truly inspirational and amazing. The sucess he obtained in the deep south during the Jim Crow area was phenomenal. Mr. Gaston was a liasion during the desegregation movement in the city of Birmingham, Alabama.

The story of A.G. Gaston is simply incredible. I purchased the book because I love to read stories about people who have overcome impossible odds to become successful business people. But I am also a 20th century history buff and therefore, this book was an exceptional treat. About halfway through, I was fantasizing about a Ken Burns documentary called, The Life And Times Of A.G. Gaston. One quick sidebar; Check out the story of Madame C.J. Walker, a Black woman born shortly after the Civil War, to former slaves. She became a multi-millionaire and died at age 52 at about the same time Mr. Gaston was returning from WWI. She was the first self made Black female millionaire and her story is also amazing. A.G. Gaston was clearly from the Booker T. Washington school of economics. He survived and thrived in an area that was arguably ground zero of the insanely racist south, and arguably ground zero of the civil rights movement. I refer to the area roughly bounded by Montgomery and Birmingham Alabama, and Meridian Mississippi. It would have

been easier for a Black man to become a multi-millionaire in almost any other area of the country. I would highly recommend this book as required reading in American high schools.

A must read for all young people. Arthur was an exceptional person and Liz and Carol weave a beautiful page turner!

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