



# **The Color of Fascism: Lawrence Dennis, Racial Passing, and the Rise of Right-Wing Extremism in the United States**

*Gerald Horne*

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What does it mean that Lawrence Dennis—arguably the “brains” behind U.S. fascism—was born black but spent his entire adult life passing for white? Born in Atlanta in 1893, Dennis began life as a highly touted African American child preacher, touring nationally and arousing audiences with his dark-skinned mother as his escort. However, at some point between leaving prep school and entering Harvard University, he chose to abandon his family and his former life as an African American in order to pass for white. Dennis went on to work for the State Department and on Wall Street, and ultimately became the public face of U.S. fascism, meeting with Mussolini and other fascist leaders in Europe. He underwent trial for sedition during World War II, almost landing in prison, and ultimately became a Cold War critic before dying in obscurity in 1977.

Based on extensive archival research, **The Color of Fascism** blends biography, social history, and critical race theory to illuminate the fascinating life of this complex and enigmatic man. Gerald Horne links passing and fascism, the two main poles of Dennis's life, suggesting that Dennis's anger with the U.S. as a result of his upbringing in Jim Crow Georgia led him to alliances with the antagonists of the U.S. and that his personal isolation which resulted in his decision to pass dovetailed with his ultimate isolationism.

Dennis's life is a lasting testament to the resilience of right-wing thought in the U.S. The first full-scale biographical portrait of this intriguing figure, **The Color of Fascism** also links the strange career of a prominent American who chose to pass.

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