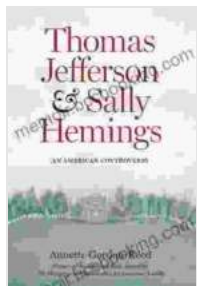


# Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy



## Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy by Annette Gordon-Reed

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 1518 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
X-Ray	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 340 pages
Paperback	: 76 pages
Item Weight	: 2.89 ounces
Dimensions	: 5 x 0.18 x 8 inches



Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy is a thought-provoking exploration of the complex relationship between the Founding Father and the enslaved woman he is believed to have had an affair with. Drawing on extensive research, Annette Gordon-Reed delves into the historical evidence, cultural context, and lasting legacy of this controversial relationship, offering a nuanced understanding of one of the most enduring scandals in American history.

Jefferson, the principal author of the Declaration of Independence and the third President of the United States, was a complex and contradictory figure. He was a brilliant intellect and a gifted writer, but he also owned

hundreds of slaves. Hemings, an enslaved woman of mixed race, was born into slavery at Jefferson's Monticello plantation. She was the half-sister of Jefferson's wife, Martha Wayles Skelton Jefferson.

The evidence for a relationship between Jefferson and Hemings is circumstantial, but it is compelling. Hemings's children bore a striking resemblance to Jefferson, and DNA tests have confirmed that Jefferson was the father of at least one of her children.

The relationship between Jefferson and Hemings has been the subject of much debate and controversy. Some historians have argued that it was a consensual relationship, while others have argued that it was a case of sexual assault. Gordon-Reed does not take a definitive position on this question, but she argues that it is important to understand the context in which the relationship took place.

Gordon-Reed's book is a valuable contribution to the scholarship on Jefferson and Hemings. It is a well-researched and nuanced account of a complex and controversial relationship. Gordon-Reed's writing is clear and engaging, and she does an excellent job of weaving together the personal stories of Jefferson and Hemings with the larger historical context.

*Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy* is a must-read for anyone interested in American history, slavery, race, or sex. It is a thought-provoking and illuminating book that sheds new light on one of the most enduring scandals in American history.

## **The Historical Evidence**

The evidence for a relationship between Jefferson and Hemings is circumstantial, but it is compelling. Hemings's children bore a striking resemblance to Jefferson, and DNA tests have confirmed that Jefferson was the father of at least one of her children.

In addition to the physical evidence, there is also documentary evidence that suggests that Jefferson and Hemings had a relationship. For example, Jefferson's overseer, Edmund Bacon, recorded in his diary that Jefferson had "a very strong attachment" to Hemings.

The historical evidence for a relationship between Jefferson and Hemings is not conclusive, but it is suggestive. Taken together, the evidence suggests that it is more likely than not that Jefferson and Hemings had a relationship.

## **The Cultural Context**

The relationship between Jefferson and Hemings took place in the context of slavery. Slavery was a brutal and dehumanizing institution that denied black people their basic rights. In the eyes of the law, slaves were property, not people.

Sexual relationships between white men and black women were common during the slavery era. These relationships were often coercive and exploitative. White men had the power to force themselves on black women, and black women had little recourse against their abusers.

The relationship between Jefferson and Hemings was not typical of sexual relationships between white men and black women during the slavery era. Jefferson and Hemings were both adults, and there is no evidence that

their relationship was coercive. However, the relationship was still problematic because it took place in the context of slavery.

## The Lasting Legacy

The relationship between Jefferson and Hemings has had a lasting legacy. It has been used to argue that Jefferson was a hypocrite who did not live up to the ideals he espoused in the Declaration of Independence. It has also been used to argue that slavery was a system that corrupted even the best of men.

The relationship between Jefferson and Hemings is a complex and controversial one. It is a reminder of the dark history of slavery in America. It is also a reminder of the resilience of the human spirit.

Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings: An American Controversy is a thought-provoking and illuminating book that sheds new light on one of the most enduring scandals in American history. Gordon-Reed's writing is clear and engaging, and she does an excellent job of weaving together the personal stories of Jefferson and Hemings with the larger historical context.

This book is a must-read for anyone interested in American history, slavery, race, or sex. It is a valuable contribution to the scholarship on Jefferson and Hemings, and it is sure to spark debate and discussion for years to come.

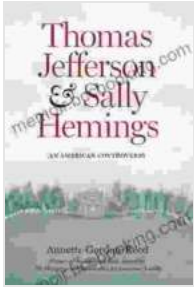
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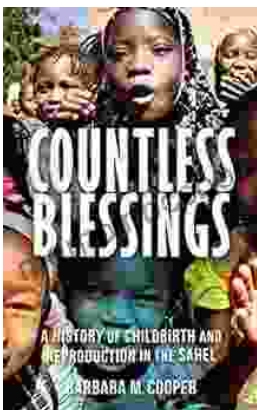


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