



How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights

Belinda Robnett

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A compelling and readable narrative history, *How Long? How Long?* presents both a rethinking of social movement theory and a controversial thesis: that chroniclers have egregiously neglected the most important leaders of the Civil Rights movement, African-American women, in favor of higher-profile African-American men and white women. Author Belinda Robnett argues that the diversity of experiences of the African-American women organizers has been underemphasized in favor of monolithic treatments of their femaleness and blackness.

Drawing heavily on interviews with actual participants in the American Civil Rights movement, this work retells the movement as seen through the eyes and spoken through the voices of African-American women participants. It is the first book to provide an analysis of race, class, gender, and culture as substructures that shaped the organization and outcome of the movement. Robnett examines the differences among women participants in the movement and offers the first cohesive analysis of the gendered relations and interactions among its black activists, thus demonstrating that femaleness and blackness cannot be viewed as sufficient signifiers for movement experience and individual identity. Finally, this book makes a significant contribution to social movement theory by providing a crucial understanding of the continuity and complexity of social movements, clarifying the need for different layers of leadership that come to satisfy different movement needs.

An engaging narrative history as well as a major contribution to social movement and feminist theory, *How Long? How Long?* will appeal to students and scholars of social activism, women's studies, American history, and African-American studies, and to general readers interested in the perennially fascinating story of the American Civil Rights movement.

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