H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Michael Ezra, ed. *Civil Rights Movement: People and Perspectives.* Perspectives in American Social History Series. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009. 250 pp. $85.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-59884-037-7.

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Published on H-Florida (October, 2009)
Commissioned by Jeanine A. Clark Bremer

A Useful Reference Work on the Civil Rights Movement

The annual outpouring of new studies on the civil rights movement marks this field as one of the most dynamic bodies of scholarship in American historiography. The field certainly has experienced broadened boundaries over the last decade. The first generation of historians who chronicled the civil rights movement focused on the most prominent personalities, organizations, and events in the American South that spanned a period from the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. Many recent scholars of the civil rights movement have expanded their focus both thematically and chronologically. Numerous studies documenting the grassroots efforts of African Americans throughout the nation against segregation and discrimination have demonstrated the breadth and complexity of a popular movement that spanned from the first years of the twentieth century and whose impact is still felt in the twenty-first century. It is this recent approach that informs the methodology behind *Civil Rights Movement.* This reference work provides a succinct, well-written, and balanced overview of some of the major themes in the recent history of the civil rights movement.

Civil Rights Movement consists of eight essays addressing different aspects of the African American freedom struggle. Editor Michael Ezra's introduction provides a concise exploration of the changing perspectives and periodizations of the civil rights movement. Ezra addresses recent debates regarding the approach of a "Long Civil Rights Movement" that places the events of 1954-68 within the context of earlier struggles and later activism.[1] Additional essays focus on the early pioneers of the movement, role of student activists, influence of religion and clergy, civil rights organizations in the South, civil rights organizations working outside the South (primarily the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People [NAACP] and Congress of Racial Equality [CORE]), nature of Black Nationalism, organizational history of the Black Panther Party, and contributions of African American women in the civil rights movement. Each essay provides a solid overview of its respective theme while incorporating recent scholarship within its interpretations. The essays provide a balanced focus that describes not only the contributions of King, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Black Panthers, and other major civil rights personalities and institutions, but also the contributions of ordinary people from all walks of life participating in an extraordinary moment in American history.

The strengths of this volume are readability and concision. Readers unfamiliar with the major personalities, events, and organizations of the civil rights movement will benefit from this work. Even those well versed in civil rights scholarship might want to consult the lengthy bibliography for recent literature of interest. Only a few aspects require critical comment. While the selected essays do incorporate recent scholarship in their sources, little commentary addresses the evolving historiography of particular aspects of the civil rights movement. This absence is likely the result of the intended audience for this reference work, general readers and undergraduate classrooms. Another absence is the lack of assessment regarding the impact of the civil rights movement. Some essays conclude rather abruptly, providing little context to the legacy of this incredibly consequential era. A concluding chapter on the social, cultural, and political legacies of the civil rights movement that connected the events of 1954-68 to the present era would have been a welcome addition.[2] Additionally, while the coverage of these essays are broad, H-Florida readers will be disappointed that the civil rights movement in the Sunshine State receives little attention. While Mary McLeod Bethune, the Tallahassee Bus Boycott, and the St. Augustine "swim-ins" are mentioned, no aspect of Florida's

civil rights history is addressed in a substantial way.

This aside, *Civil Rights Movement* is a useful reference work that deserves to be read by undergraduate and graduate students, as well as a general readership. While the cost of this reference work will likely prove prohibitive for classroom use and most personal libraries, public and academic libraries would enhance their reference collections by acquiring this book.

Notes

[1]. For further context on the implications of the "Long Civil Rights Movement" debate, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History*, 91 (2005): 1233-1263; and Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Long, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *Journal of African American History*, 92 (Spring 2007): 265-288.

[2]. The 2008 election of Barack Obama is not mentioned in the text, almost certainly the result of academic publication timetables rather than an unintentional omission.

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Citation: Daniel Hutchinson. Review of Ezra, Michael, ed., *Civil Rights Movement: People and Perspectives.* H-Florida, H-Net Reviews. October, 2009.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=25264

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