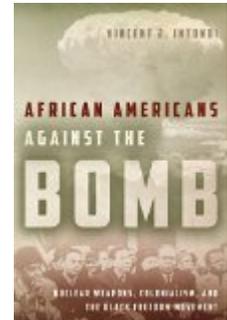




**Vincent J. Intondi.** *African Americans against the Bomb: Nuclear Weapons, Colonialism, and the Black Freedom Movement.* Stanford Nuclear Age Series. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015. 224 pp. \$85.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-8047-8942-4.



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**Commissioned by** Margaret Sankey (Air University)

In this work, Vincent J. Intondi argues that the contribution of African Americans to the cause of nuclear nonproliferation in the United States has largely been marginalized and ignored by scholars. He describes how African American activists have worked to slow the development of or to eliminate nuclear weapons in America since the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The author provides several explanations for this activism. Some opposed the development of nuclear bombs because of a perceived connection between colonialism and the development of nuclear technology. Activists noted that uranium from Africa was used in the first nuclear bombs, further stripping resources from colonial possessions in order to help colonial powers and their allies. Some feared that bombs would be used to support colonial empires against subjugated people. Some activists opposed nuclear weapons because they saw race as a driving reason for the use of these weapons against the Japanese and feared they would be used against other nonwhites in the world. Yet many African Americans opposed nu-

clear weapons because of how unsafe they felt these weapons made the world and how much of America's resources were being utilized toward developing these weapons when such resources could have been used to improve American society.

Intondi thoroughly traces the development of antinuclear activism in the African American community. He acknowledges that the strength of this movement varied over time, due to such events in the United States as McCarthyism, the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War, and the hardening of the Cold War during the early Ronald Reagan years. Yet the author asserts that a chain of antinuclear activism is evident in the African American community and is part of a larger activism by African Americans against colonialism, racism, and discrimination. Intondi develops his argument by providing numerous quotations from Langston Hughes, Paul Robeson, W. E. B. DuBois, Rayard Rustin, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Coretta Scott King, Andrew Young, and others that tie the issues of colonialism,

racism, discrimination, and nuclear proliferation together. Yet how strongly these activists and others focused on the antinuclear aspect of this argument varies. Some activists, such as Greg and Brenda Johnson who founded Blacks Against Nukes (BAN) in the 1980s, focused their work on antinuclear activities, while others focused on racism and discrimination in America. The chain that Intondi wishes to uncover appears to be more of a thread that can be found weaving its way through American activism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Intondi organizes his narrative chronologically and maintains this organizational structure throughout most of the book. However, there are some places where he deviates from this structure and the narrative becomes confusing. For example, in chapter 4, which centers on the 1960s antinuclear movement, Intondi focuses on King's antinuclear statements. Toward the end of this chapter, he switches from describing King's stance up to his death in 1968 to describing Malcolm X's antinuclear stance in 1964. The switch in chronology makes the end of this chapter weak and weakens the overall persuasiveness of his arguments.

Intondi relies heavily on activists' antinuclear statements to prove his arguments about the strength of their antinuclear commitment. He is most effective at proving his points when he interweaves these antinuclear accounts within his own narrative. When he includes lengthy statements standing on their own within a page, the narrative of his argument is interrupted and becomes less effective. The long quotations weaken his narrative and, thus, weaken his argument.

Intondi's work provides a significant historiographical contribution to the history of antinuclear activism in the United States. He mentions antinuclear marches and rallies that are typically not included in histories of activism. Intondi's particular focus on African Americans illustrates the struggles they faced to have their message heard and to not be restricted in the types of ac-

tivism they could engage in. Furthermore, participants' personal stories describe the struggles African Americans endured to achieve leadership roles and have their voices heard within the very organizations they worked in to try and facilitate change regarding nuclear proliferation in America and even the world. Intondi's monograph points to the antinuclear activism of African Americans that existed within the larger peace movement, civil rights movement, and other activist movements since 1945.

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