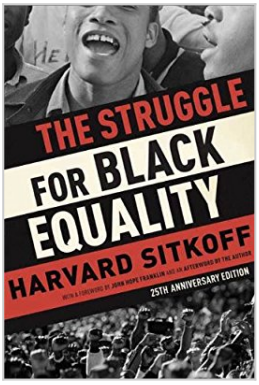

The Struggle for Black Equality

By Harvard Sitkoff

The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff

The Struggle for Black Equality is a dramatic, memorable history of the civil rights movement. Harvard Sitkoff offers both a brilliant interpretation of the personalities and dynamics of civil rights organizations and a compelling analysis of the continuing problems plaguing many African Americans. With a new foreword and afterword, and an up-to-date bibliography, this anniversary edition highlights the continuing significance of the movement for black equality and justice.

The Struggle for Black Equality

By Harvard Sitkoff

The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff

The Struggle for Black Equality is a dramatic, memorable history of the civil rights movement. Harvard Sitkoff offers both a brilliant interpretation of the personalities and dynamics of civil rights organizations and a compelling analysis of the continuing problems plaguing many African Americans. With a new foreword and afterword, and an up-to-date bibliography, this anniversary edition highlights the continuing significance of the movement for black equality and justice.

The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #375036 in eBooks
- Published on: 2008-09-30
- Released on: 2008-09-30
- Format: Kindle eBook

Editorial Review

About the Author

Harvard Sitkoff, of the University of New Hampshire, is the author of numerous books, including *King: Pilgrimage to the Mountaintop* (H&W, 2008).

THE STRUGGLE FOR BLACK EQUALITY (Chapter One)Up From Slavery

There is a difference in knowing you are black and in understanding what it means to be black in America. Before I was ten I knew what it was to step off the sidewalk to let a white man pass.

MARGARET WALKER

Nourished by anger, revolutions are born of hope. They are the offspring of belief and bitterness, of faith in the attainment of one's goals and indignation at the limited rate and extent of change. Rarely in history are the two stirrings confluent in a sufficient force to generate an effective, radical social movement. They would be so in African America in the 1960s.

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, however, few African-Americans struggled hopefully. Many African-Americans resisted, often in subtle and solitary ways, at times in an organized and collective manner, transmitting from one generation to the next a tradition of black protest. But their initial efforts to continue the campaign against Jim Crow initiated by the black abolitionists failed to stem the rising crest of white racism after Reconstruction. Largely bereft of white allies, blacks fought on the defensive, trying to hold their limited gains. They lost each battle. Congress permitted the white South to reduce blacks to a state of peonage, to disregard their civil rights, and to disenfranchise them by force, intimidation, and statute. So did the Supreme Court. Writing into the Constitution its own beliefs in the inferiority of blacks, the late-nineteenth-century high court tightened every possible shackle confining the ex-slaves. Most American scholars cheered this legal counterrevolution which effectively nullified the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. It exemplified their teachings of inherent and irremediable racial differences, of blacks as the most primitive, degraded, and least civilized of the races, and of the folly of governmental tampering with local folkways. Whether appealing to scriptural or scientific evidence, to Darwinism, the gospel of Anglo-Saxonism, or the new interest in eugenics, a generation of clergymen, editors, and educators propounded the intellectual rationalizations for white supremacy.

Not surprisingly, most white Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century believed that, for the good of all, the naturally superior whites should rule over the baser races. They heard or read little to the contrary. The Southern Way had become the American Way. Even the most humanitarian reformers concerned with racial injustice counseled gradualism. Northern liberals preached the necessity of deferring citizenship for blacks until the freedmen were ready for it; they emphasized the long-term gains to be derived from education, religion, and economic uplift and denigrated strategies predicated on agitation, force, or political activity.

This total acquiescence by government officials and Northern public opinion gave the white South all the permission it needed to institutionalize its white-supremacist beliefs. First came disenfranchisement,

accomplished in the 1880s mainly through fraud and force. All the Southern states felt emboldened in the next two decades to follow the lead of the 1890 Mississippi state constitutional convention in officially adopting such disenfranchising techniques as poll taxes, “grandfather clauses,” literacy and “good character” tests, and white primaries. Black voter registration plummeted 96 percent in Louisiana between 1896 and 1900. The number of African-Americans permitted to vote in the new century hovered around 3,500 in Alabama, which had an adult black population of nearly 300,000; and in Mississippi, with an even larger black population, fewer than a thousand blacks voted.

Political impotency bore on every aspect of African-American life. Unable to participate in the enactment or enforcement of the law, Southern blacks became increasingly vulnerable to physical assault and murder. Over a thousand were lynched between 1900 and 1915. No records exist to tally the number beaten or tortured. Nor can one describe adequately the terror of living with a constant fear of barbarity and violence, of having your security subject to the whim of those who despise you, of having no recourse to police or courts.

The Southern states, in addition, adopted a host of statutes methodically outlawing everything “interracial.” These new segregation laws expressed the white South’s all-encompassing belief in the inequality of blacks. Most Southern states now formally required Negroes and whites to be born separately in segregated hospitals; to live their lives as separately as possible in segregated schools, public accommodations, and places of work and recreation; and, presumably, to dwell in the next life separately in segregated funeral homes and cemeteries. The rapid proliferation of Jim Crow laws inspired an irrational competition among Southern legislators to erect ever more and higher barriers between the races. “White” and “Colored” signs sprouted everywhere and on everything. Atlanta mandated Jim Crow Bibles in its courtrooms and prohibited African-Americans and whites from using the same park facilities, even from visiting the municipal zoo at the same time. Alabama forbade African-Americans to play checkers with whites, and Mississippi insisted on Jim Crow taxicabs. New Orleans segregated its prostitutes, and Oklahoma, its telephone booths. The lawmakers of Florida and North Carolina saw to it that white students would never touch textbooks used by African-Americans. Such edicts bolstered white power and privilege while demeaning the spirit of African-Americans.

Jim Crow, furthermore, easily led to gross inequities in the distribution of public monies for education and civic services. The eleven Southern states in 1916 spent an average of $10.32 per white public-school student, and only $2.89 per black pupil. There was one hospital bed available for every 139 American whites in the 1920s, but only one for every 1,941 blacks. And that was not all. Southern governments victimized blacks by bestial convict-leasing and chain-gang practices, and confined them to serfdom on the lowest rung of the economic ladder, doing all they could to implement the view of James K. Vardaman, who became Governor of Mississippi in 1904, that “God Almighty had created the Negro for a menial.”

Alexis de Tocqueville’s observation early in the nineteenth century that white Americans “scarcely acknowledge the common features of humanity in this stranger whom slavery has brought among them” remained as accurate a century later.

And blacks could do little to alter the situation. More than 90 percent of the nearly ten million African-Americans in 1910 lived in the South, three-quarters of them in rural areas, the vast majority working a white man’s land, with a white man’s mule and a white man’s credit. Theirs was an oppressive, closed society, designed to thwart black advancement and encourage black subservience. All political and economic power remained vested in whites determined to maintain the status quo, however many black lives it cost. Daily facing grinding poverty, physical helplessness, and all the banal crudities of existence under an open, professed, and boasting racism, many blacks grew fatalistic. Segregation and discrimination came to seem permanent, immutable, an inevitable condition of life, and the majority of African-Americans succumbed to

the new racial order.

But not all. Some protested by migrating. Between 1890 and 1910, nearly two hundred thousand Southern blacks fled to the North. Others returned to Africa or established autonomous black communities in the West. A few, mostly members of the tiny, Northern black elite, continued the struggle they had inherited from the black abolitionists and from the inspiring vision of equal rights nourished by the Civil War and Reconstruction. They spoke out for racial justice in such organizations as the Afro-American Council, Monroe Trotter's National Equal Rights League, Ida B. Wells's Antilynching League, and the Niagara Movement. Yet few blacks heard their pleas, and fewer whites heeded their demands. These small communities of resistance and struggle in the early twentieth century, lacking adequate finances, political leverage, influential white allies, access to the major institutions shaping public opinion and policy, and the support of large numbers of blacks, could do virtually nothing to alter the course of American life and thought. As Willie Brown lamented in his blues:

Can't tell my future, I can't tell my past.

Lord, it seems like every minute sure gon' be my last.

Oh, a minute seems like hours, and hours seem like days.

And a minute seems like hours, hour seems like days.

The ascendancy of Booker T. Washington at the turn of the century epitomized both the widespread despair of blacks and the powerlessness of the handful of blacks actively fighting against racial injustice. Although he worked covertly to diminish disenfranchisement and Jim Crow, Washington publicly emphasized the necessity of accommodation, conciliation, and gradualism. "The best course to pursue in regard to civil rights," he lectured to blacks, "is to let it alone; let it alone and it will settle itself." When the British author H. G. Wells criticized Jim Crow while on a visit to the United States, Washington answered back: "The only answer to it is for colored men to be patient, to make themselves competent, to do good work, to give no occasion against us." A spokesman for the emerging black middle class, he counseled all blacks to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps. Too few, however, even had boots, and in the years before his death in 1915, Washington's nostrums failed abysmally to alleviate the plight of blacks.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, organized in 1910, fared no better. Declaring its pur...

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Marcus:

Here thing why that The Struggle for Black Equality are different and reputable to be yours. First of all studying a book is good however it depends in the content of the usb ports which is the content is as scrumptious as food or not. The Struggle for Black Equality giving you information deeper and in different ways, you can find any guide out there but there is no book that similar with The Struggle for Black Equality. It gives you thrill looking at journey, its open up your current eyes about the thing in which happened in the world which is perhaps can be happened around you. It is easy to bring everywhere like in park your car, café, or even in your approach home by train. For anyone who is having difficulties in bringing the published book maybe the form of The Struggle for Black Equality in e-book can be your

choice.

Shawn Jones:

The knowledge that you get from The Struggle for Black Equality will be the more deep you looking the information that hide within the words the more you get considering reading it. It does not mean that this book is hard to know but The Struggle for Black Equality giving you excitement feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their point in selected way that can be understood by means of anyone who read this because the author of this e-book is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your personal vocabulary increase well. That makes it easy to understand then can go along, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having that The Struggle for Black Equality instantly.

Cynthia Cisneros:

The publication with title The Struggle for Black Equality has a lot of information that you can study it. You can get a lot of advantage after read this book. This kind of book exist new expertise the information that exist in this publication represented the condition of the world now. That is important to yo7u to be aware of how the improvement of the world. This specific book will bring you throughout new era of the internationalization. You can read the e-book on your smart phone, so you can read that anywhere you want.

Ora Orozco:

You may spend your free time to learn this book this reserve. This The Struggle for Black Equality is simple to bring you can read it in the park, in the beach, train along with soon. If you did not have got much space to bring the actual printed book, you can buy the e-book. It is make you easier to read it. You can save typically the book in your smart phone. Thus there are a lot of benefits that you will get when you buy this book.

Read The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff for online ebook

The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff Free PDF d0wnl0ad, audio books, books to read, good books to read, cheap books, good books, online books, books online, book reviews epub, read books online, books to read online, online library, greatbooks to read, PDF best books to read, top books to read The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff books to read online.

Online The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff ebook PDF download

The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff Doc

The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff Mobipocket

The Struggle for Black Equality By Harvard Sitkoff EPub