

Challenging U.S. Apartheid



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出版者:Duke Univ Pr

出版时间:2006-7

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780822337911

Challenging U.S. Apartheid is an innovative, richly detailed history of Black struggles for human dignity, equality, and opportunity in Atlanta from the early 1960s through the end of the initial term of Maynard Jackson, the city's first Black mayor, in 1977. Winston A. Grady-Willis provides a seamless narrative stretching from the student non-violent direct action movement to the first experiments in urban field organizing through efforts to define and realize the meaning of Black Power to the re-emergence of Black woman-centred activism. The work of African Americans in Atlanta, Grady-Willis argues, was crucial to the broader development of late-twentieth-century Black freedom struggles. Grady-Willis describes Black activism within a human-rights framework rather than in terms of civil rights. As he demonstrates, civil rights were only one part of a larger fight for self-determination, a fight to dismantle a system of inequalities that he conceptualizes as "apartheid structures." Drawing on archival research and interviews with a number of activists of the 1960s and 1970s, he illuminates a wide range of activities, organizations, and achievements, including the neighbourhood-based efforts of Atlanta's Black working poor, clandestine associations such as the African American women's group Sojourner South, and the establishment of autonomous Black intellectual institutions such as the Institute of the Black World.

Grady-Willis' chronicle of the intra-racial politics of the Black movement for social justice in Atlanta brings to light overlapping ideologies, gender and class differences, and conflicts over divergent policies, strategies, and tactics. It also highlights the work of grassroots activists, who take centre stage alongside well-known figures in Challenging U.S. Apartheid. Women, who played central roles in the human rights struggle in Atlanta, are at the foreground of this history.

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