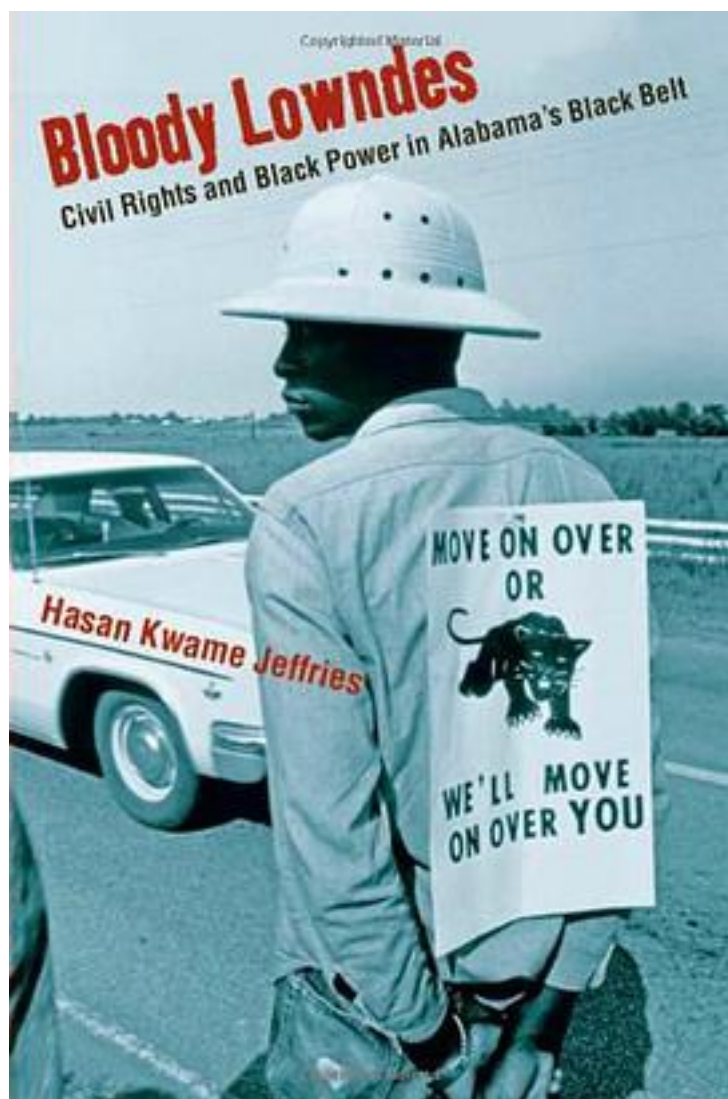


Bloody Lowndes



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In April 1966, local activists from rural Lowndes County, Alabama, together with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) established an all-black, independent political party called the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO). The group, whose ballot symbol was a snarling black panther, was formed in part to protest against the ongoing barriers to black enfranchisement. One year earlier, not a single one of the five thousand African Americans of voting age in the majority black county was registered, despite the passage of the Voting Rights Act. Most were too scared even to try because of the county's long history of bloody, retaliatory violence committed by whites against blacks who strove to exert the freedom granted to them after the Civil War. Amid this environment of intimidation and disempowerment, black people in Lowndes County viewed the LCFO as the best vehicle for concrete change. Later that year, California-based activists Bobby Seale and Huey P. Newton adopted the LCFO panther as the namesake for their new, grassroots organization: the Black Panther Party for Self Defense. This party and its adopted symbol went on to become the national organization of black militancy in the 1960s and 1970s, yet long-observed is the crucial role that Lowndes County - historically a bastion of white supremacy - played in the story of black militancy, inspiring black activists throughout the nation to fight for their rights. Drawing on sources ranging from government documents to personal interviews with Lowndes County residents, Hasan Kwame Jeffries tells, for the first time, the remarkable full story of the Lowndes County freedom struggle and its contribution to the larger civil rights movement. Bridging the gaping hole in the literature between civil rights organizing and Black Power politics, "Bloody Lowndes" offers a new paradigm for understanding the civil rights movement.

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