

Now is the Time!



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著者:Shaw, Todd Cameron

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"Now Is the Time!" delves into the political strategies of post-Civil Rights Movement African American activists in Detroit, Michigan, to discover the conditions for effective social activism. Analyzing a wide range of grassroots community housing initiatives to revitalize Detroit's failing urban centre and aid its impoverished population, Todd C. Shaw seeks to understand why certain collective actions have far-reaching effects while others fail to yield positive results. He emerges with EBAM (Effective Black Activism Model), a detailed political model that illuminates crucial elements of successful grassroots activism: strong alliances, strategic advantages, and adaptive techniques. EBAM shows that political action must happen at the right time, in the right place, and with the right tactic, to be effective. Shaw employs the tools of social movement analysis, including qualitative analysis of budgets, electoral data, and housing statistics, as well as historical research and personal interviews, to better understand the dilemmas, innovations, and dynamics of grassroots activism. He begins with a history of discriminatory housing practices and racial divisions that deeply affected post-World War II Detroit and set the stage for the election of Detroit's first black mayor, Coleman Young. By emphasizing downtown redevelopment, Mayor Young's administration often collided with low-income housing advocates. Only through grassroots activism were those advocates able to delay or derail governmental efforts to demolish low-income housing to make way for up-scale development. Shaw then looks at present-day public housing activism, assessing the mixed success of the nationally sponsored HOPE VI project aimed at fostering home ownership in low-income areas. Descriptive and prescriptive, "Now Is the Time!" traces the complicated legacy of community activism to illuminate what is required for grassroots activists to be effective in demanding public accountability to poor and marginalized citizens.

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目录:

[Now is the Time!_ 下载链接1](#)

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