

The Greenwood Encyclopedia of African American Civil Rights

*From Emancipation to the
Twenty-First Century
Volume I
A-R*

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FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

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The updating and expansion of this wonderfully rich research aid is a most welcome event. Ten years ago, reviewing the original manuscript for this volume, I was deeply impressed with how many leads for more extensive future research a large number of these short essays called to mind.

Disappointingly, however, this past decade has unfortunately not witnessed anywhere near as much of a progression in African American civil rights and freedom struggle historiography as there ideally should have been. A number of landmark volumes have appeared, such as Charles Payne's *I've Got the Light of Freedom* (1995) on Mississippi and Adam Fairclough's *Race and Democracy* (1995) on Louisiana, but the overall breadth and scale of "movement" scholarship still falls far short of what one might optimistically have imagined 15 or 20 years ago. When one looks at the tremendous explosions of scholarly energy that in recent years have marked the fields of labor history, women's history, and gay and lesbian history, black freedom struggle scholarship is still waiting for a similar burst of activity. Younger scholars such as Timothy Minchin (*Hiring the Black Worker*, 1999 and *The Color of Work*, 2001) are showing just how many available avenues there are for creatively original research, but presently there are not as many young scholars proceeding down these paths as there should be. That need is all the more pressing as the ongoing passage of time gets to the point where more and more surviving veterans of 1950s and 1960s activism reach the ages where their future time with us threatens to draw to a close.

Undergraduate or graduate students perusing this volume should keep those thoughts in mind, for an expanded pipeline of younger people who are inter-

ested in preserving and telling the movement's story in all of the multifaceted local richness that it merits is crucial if freedom struggle historiography is to grow. The range of contributions to this encyclopedia suggests just how many possible paths there are, many of them in areas that are more "cultural" than the political and economic developments that are oftentimes most intriguing to those of us who are traditional historians. And while many topics from the 1950s and 1960s still merit further attention, scholars have been relatively slow to turn their gaze toward post-1968 developments in black America. As a new and younger generation of black elected officials begins to succeed more experienced representatives who in many instances were firsthand veterans of the movement, the political agenda of black America reflects more and more change, with new issues such as black communities' interest in school vouchers being added to more traditional and painful concerns such as racial profiling and police brutality.

But this emerging generation of prospectively "postracial" African American elected officials is only one of a plethora of subjects that ought to interest students and young scholars. The opportunities for new and important work of African American civil rights are almost limitless, and I hope deeply that this new and expanded edition of this rich encyclopedia will stimulate a significant number of young people to take up that task.