



Blacks register to vote in Birmingham, Alabama, 1966. (Archives Collections, Birmingham Public Library, Birmingham, Alabama.)

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS

From Emancipation to the Present

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FOREWORD

David J. Garrow

This *Encyclopedia of African-American Civil Rights* is a valuable and informative reference volume, but it is also so rich a source of important sketches and instructive bibliographical references that it deserves—and encourages—a fairly thorough reading even by knowledgeable senior scholars.

The range and breadth of entries is oftentimes as impressive as it is informative. Most importantly, any thoughtful perusal of the volume—whether thorough or cursory—will quickly bring home to any reader what a large number of individuals, organizations, and events there are from these last ten decades of Afro-American history which deserve greater and more extensive historical research and study than has yet been the case.

As many scholars now recognize, current and future research in Afro-American history will increasingly treat a wider and wider range of participants and events. To date a disproportionate amount of historical attention has been focused on nationally prominent individuals and on organizations that received significant contemporaneous news coverage, but there is widespread appreciation that increased attention to “grass roots” individuals and organizations is our future direction, just as there also is growing appreciation of the importance of “local” history and events. Less and less will Afro-American history look at the black experience in America largely through a prism of national news and/or national politics.

No one can peruse this volume without thinking again and again about otherwise obscure and/or often unremembered individuals, protests, and court cases that merit a greater presence in secondary sources and textbook surveys than is presently the case. Probably every contributor

hopes that this encyclopedia's publication will further stimulate and encourage such a broadening of secondary historical coverage, and such a hope is quite likely to be fulfilled. While many contributors to this encyclopedia are relatively senior scholars such as John Kirby, Steven Lawson, Jo Ann O. Robinson, Hans Trefousse, and Jerry Ward, many of the most thorough and impressive contributions come from promising junior scholars such as Cheryl Greenberg, Patricia Behlar, Peter Wallenstein, Francille Wilson, Lillie Johnson Edwards, and Glenn T. Eskew.

One very important and as yet largely unmined resource for an expanded and enriched Afro-American history since the late nineteenth century, which a number of significant entries highlight or touch upon, is black newspapers. Although many issues of a number of significant publications most tragically seem to have not been preserved, both national papers such as the *Pittsburgh Courier* and more regionally or locally oriented papers such as the *Birmingham World* can be exceptionally rich and instructive sources for future historical studies. Few scholars enjoy spending hundreds upon hundreds of hours reading microfilm, but there is no escaping the fact that far more use can and will be made of black newspapers as a significant historical source than has yet been the case.

The historical importance of black newspapers is just one notable research path that this rich and valuable volume suggests. Notwithstanding the thoroughness of many of this encyclopedia's more than eight hundred articles, hardly any scholar or student will be able to peruse the useful bibliographies that follow each entry without recognizing a significant number of subjects and individuals who undeniably deserve further or greatly increased research attention. If this volume's publication can stimulate even a modest number of such new research interests, it will have provided a significant scholarly service in addition to the very notable long-term reference value that it will offer to innumerable scholars and students. Such a goal is one which undeniably deserves to be fulfilled.

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