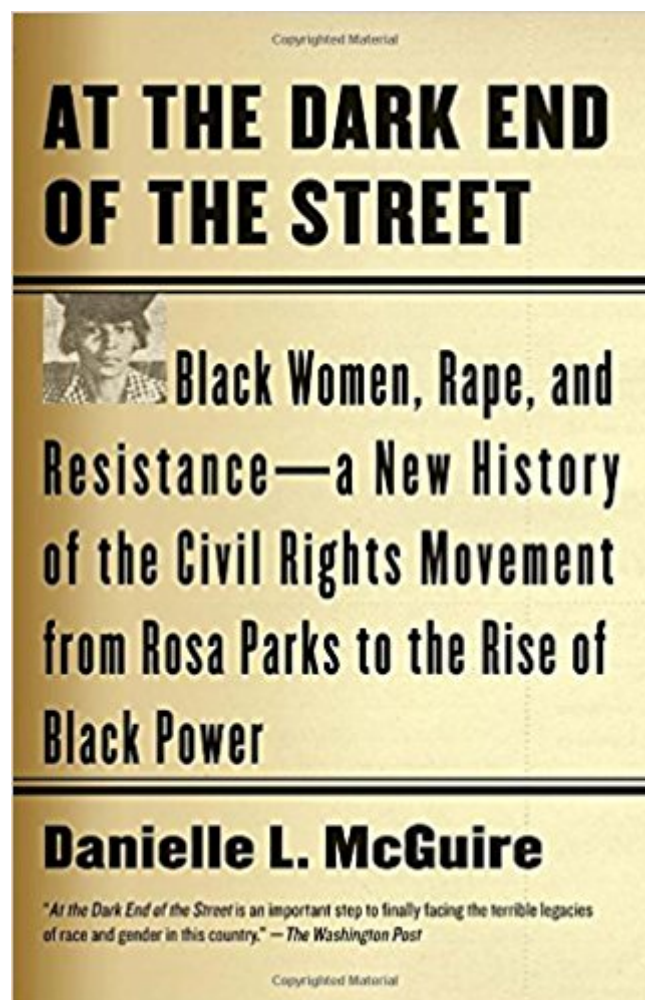


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At The Dark End Of The Street: Black Women, Rape, And Resistance--A New History Of The Civil Rights Movement From Rosa Parks To The Rise Of Black Power





Synopsis

Rosa Parks was often described as a sweet and reticent elderly woman whose tired feet caused her to defy segregation on Montgomery's city buses, and whose supposedly solitary, spontaneous act sparked the 1955 bus boycott that gave birth to the civil rights movement. The truth of who Rosa Parks was and what really lay beneath the 1955 boycott is far different from anything previously written. In this groundbreaking and important book, Danielle McGuire writes about the rape in 1944 of a twenty-four-year-old mother and sharecropper, Recy Taylor, who strolled toward home after an evening of singing and praying at the Rock Hill Holiness Church in Abbeville, Alabama. Seven white men, armed with knives and shotguns, ordered the young woman into their green Chevrolet, raped her, and left her for dead. The president of the local NAACP branch office sent his best investigator and organizer--Rosa Parks--to Abbeville. In taking on this case, Parks launched a movement that exposed a ritualized history of sexual assault against black women and added fire to the growing call for change.

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Customer Reviews

Long before Rosa Parks became famous for resisting Jim Crow laws, she was engaged in advocating for social justice for black women who were the victims of sexual violence at the hands of white men. Historian McGuire aims to rewrite the history of the civil rights movement by highlighting sexual violence in the broader context of racial injustice and the fight for freedom. Parks worked as an investigator for the NAACP branch office in Montgomery, Alabama, specializing in cases involving black women who had been sexually assaulted by white

this compelling, carefully documented work. • Publisher's Weekly (starred review) "Just when we thought there couldn't possibly be anything left to uncover about the civil rights movement, Danielle McGuire finds a new facet of that endlessly prismatic struggle at the core of our national identity. • Diane McWhorter, author of *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, the Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* "Eye-opening. • Sacramento Book Review "Following the lead of pioneers like Darlene Clark Hine, Danielle McGuire details the all too ignored tactic of rape of black women in the everyday practice of southern white supremacy. Just as important, she plots resistance against this outrage as an integral facet of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. This book is as essential as its history is infuriating. • Nell Irvin Painter, author of *The History of White People*

Danielle L. McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street* provides an excellent examination of the Civil Rights Movement and the history of sexual assault against black women. Assistant Professor of History at Wayne State University, McGuire analyzes the ritualization of sexual assault and its use as a weapon to maintain white superiority. McGuire has successfully written a compelling and thought-provoking work that truly adds another dimension to the study of the Civil Rights Movement. McGuire brilliantly opens the book with the story of Recy Taylor, effectively grabbing the attention of the reader and setting the tone for the remainder of the work. By beginning the narrative with such a horrific event, McGuire drives home the reality of life for African American women during the Jim Crow era. As scaring and horrific as sexual assault truly is, during this time period it was effectively weaponized. It became a weapon of the white male patriarchy to use in its war against the black population. This was a way to maintain white superiority and break the spirit of African American women. It was a weapon of fear, which was terrible, yet effective. In *At the Dark End of the Street*, McGuire discusses how African American women physically defended themselves against their attackers. Those who killed their attackers were often charged with murder even though they were acting in self-defense. It was important for the NAACP and other organizations to play an active role in the advocacy of these victims. One such advocate/investigator was Rosa Parks, a woman who is generally only thought of as an elderly woman who refused to give up her seat on the bus. As McGuire shows, she was much more than that. *At the Dark End of the Street* is an excellent work that examines a tremendously understudied aspect of the Civil Rights Movement. McGuire has crafted a compelling narrative that engrosses the reader and shines light upon a truly dark time. This book is an invaluable addition to the existing

historiography and forces the reader to rethink what they know about the Civil Rights Movement.

Seriously. Out of all of the history books that i read in high school and in the libraries, this was the only one that actually CLICKED for me. The rampant rape of black women throughout slavery and the Jim Crow Era has always been ignored or quickly dismissed in historical books before but this great author made sure to NOT do that! I love her for that! This book needs to be made into a movie one day! This will be the first time where our stories will be told thoroughly. I watched *The Help*, and it failed to mention the sexual assaults and rapes that the black women suffered. Although i enjoyed the movie somewhat, i was still disappointed because they refused to let our REAL stories get told. You can't have a good story set in the Jim Crow era without telling the rampant rapes of black women by white men and other men. It's part of our history. Whether many people want to admit it or not!

This was an excellent book. I read it for a Women's Studies course and am so glad I did. It is a hard read at times due to the subject matter and I got chills over and over with every page I turned. This is a dense read so full of information, facts, and, the best part in my opinion, stories that hit you straight in your emotions (I am not ashamed to admit I got a little teary eyed at times). The Civil Rights Movement in the US is definitely taken for granted and has been whittled down to little bites of history where MLK Jr. is glorified and positioned as the center piece but if you read this book you'll learn there was so so much more to it and that once again history bears its burden on the backs of so many brave black women.

In her first work, Danielle L. McGuire, a professor of history at Wayne St. University (she earned her Ph.D. from Rutgers) produces a ground breaking study on the origins of the civil rights movement in the 1940s and its relation to issues of gender and sexuality. As McGuire notes, the exploitation of black women for sexual purposes had roots stretching back to slavery and continuing into the twentieth century. (xviii) Rape of black women was used to uphold white patriarchal power and used as a justification for lynching black men who dared to challenge the status quo. (xviii) Finally, the author notes that, for the most part, analyses of rape and sexualized violence play little to no part in most of the histories of the civil rights movement. These histories "present it as a struggle between black and white men--the heroic leadership of Martin Luther King confronting intransigent white supremacists like Connor." (xx) Thus she argues the real story

has never been written, and that real story is that the civil rights movement is tied to the long struggle of African American women against sexual violence. (xx) This book uses the subaltern approach and applies it to the Civil Rights Movement as it is dealing with women and their effects of cause of justice in the 1940s and 1950s. McGuire uses not only gendered analysis, but also the themes of sex and sexual violence as well as patriarchy. The sources she uses to formulate her arguments are vast and include newspaper reports, letters written to political officials, court transcripts and even photos. When it comes to secondary sources she includes such notables as Thomas Borstelmann's *The Cold War and the Color Line*, Taylor Branch's *Parting the Waters*, Mary Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights*, and Robert Norrell's *Reaping the Whirlwind*. As with many of the works detailing the Civil Rights Movement, this work is very well written and is easily accessible by the lay person as well as the specialist. This timely book has made an original contribution to the historical literature of the civil rights movement. Her lucid arguments are such that it will be difficult to see how the standard narrative of the Civil Rights Movement can not be effected by this amazing work. If you are interested in civil rights this is one you must own.

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