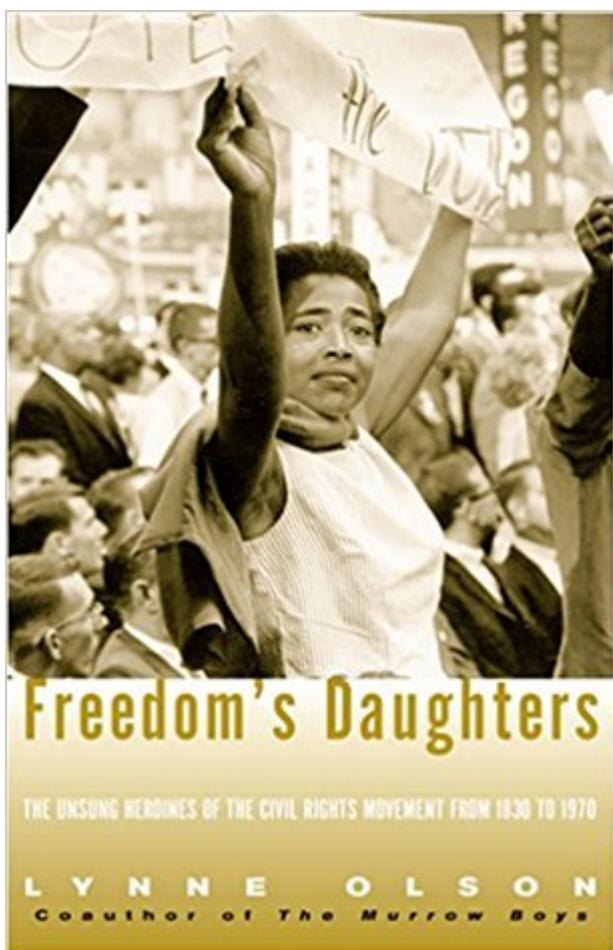


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# Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroines Of The Civil Rights Movement From 1830 To 1970



## Synopsis

The first comprehensive history of the role of women in the civil rights movement, *Freedom's Daughters* fills a startling gap in both the literature of civil rights and of women's history. Stokely Carmichael, Andrew Young, John Lewis, and other well-known leaders of the civil rights movement have admitted that women often had the ideas for which men took credit. In this groundbreaking book, credit finally goes where credit is due -- to the bold women who were crucial to the movement's success and who refused to give up the fight. From the Montgomery bus boycott to the lunch counter sit-ins to the Freedom Rides, Lynne Olson's *Freedom's Daughters* offers a remarkable corrective to the standard history as she tells the long overlooked story of the extraordinary women, both black and white, who were among the most fearless, resourceful, and tenacious leaders of the civil rights movement. Reminding us that the story of women fighting for civil rights began much earlier than the 1950s and 1960s, Olson puts the formal civil rights movement into the context of a much larger history of women's activism. From the abolitionist and suffragist movements to women's liberation, Olson proves that the political activity of women has been the thread connecting the big reform movements from the 1830s to 1970. Into this context, then, she introduces portraits and cameos of more than sixty women -- many until now forgotten and some never before written about -- from the key figures (Pauli Murray, Ida Wells, Eleanor Roosevelt, Ella Baker, and Septima Clark, among others) whose activism spanned several different movements and decades to some of the smaller players who represent the hundreds and hundreds of women who each came forth to do her own small part and who together ultimately formed the mass movements that made the difference. As one male activist said of the movement in Mississippi: It was a woman's war. This is the story of women making difficult choices, trying to balance lives as wives and mothers with their all-consuming work, defying society's standards of proper female behavior. It's the story of indomitable black women like Diane Nash who refused to give up the civil rights fight, even as the formal movement collapsed, and of white female civil rights activists mourning the loss of their old movement while helping to launch a new one -- the battle for women's rights. *Freedom's Daughters* puts a human face on the civil rights struggle -- and shows that that face was often female.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Although men like Martin Luther King Jr. and Stokely Carmichael grabbed the headlines, women provided not just the backbone but frequently the leadership of the civil rights movement, this punchy popular history reminds us. And not just during the 1950s and '60s: Ida Mae Wells spearheaded an international anti-lynching campaign in 1892, Mary White Ovington helped launch the NAACP in 1909, and Pauli Murray led the first sit-in in 1944. The civil rights and feminist movements have been intertwined since the 19th century, notes Lynne Olson, who doesn't flinch from describing the ways in which sex has been used as a weapon to define and divide black and white women. Olson, coauthor of *The Murrow Boys*, again displays a marvelous knack for knitting sharp individual portraits into a cohesive group biography within a lively, accessible narrative. She makes it clear that women like Rosa Parks, Diane Nash, and Ida Mae Holland were not mere foot soldiers for male generals. Parks's record of civil rights work dated to the 1940s, long before she sparked the Montgomery bus boycott. The 22-year-old Nash revitalized the Freedom Rides after male colleagues nearly abandoned them in the wake of white violence. Holland transformed herself from an 18-year-old prostitute into a determined activist inspired by the older women she called "mamas" who could be seen on the front lines of every march, singing and testifying. Ella Baker, Jo Ann Robinson, Septima Clark, and Fannie Lou Hamer are among the other neglected figures who finally get their due in Olson's moving tribute. --Wendy Smith

As Olson recounts it, the day after Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Ala., bus, the city's black leaders held a mass meeting to promote a boycott. It was December 1955, and the meeting was packed with ministers and others who wanted to speak, among them Parks. The crowd never heard from her. "You've said enough," one of the leaders told her. And with that, Olson

says, Parks became a shining example of the role of women in the Civil Rights movement: they got things started and the men took the spotlight. With a large supply of such examples, Olson, a former Baltimore Sun reporter, showcases in this extensively researched history women like Ida Mae "Cat" Holland, a Mississippi prostitute whose failed attempt to proposition a leader in the voter registration drive of the early 1960s led her to a life of activism and, eventually, a Ph.D. and an academic career. We read about Fannie Lou Hamer, a poorly educated Mississippi native who movement leaders said could get people more worked up than Martin Luther King Jr. Ruby Doris Smith Robinson was the only woman to hold a top leadership job in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Robinson died of cancer at 25, but her female colleagues think what really killed her was her effort to keep the movement together. In simple but engaging prose, Olson offers a stunning portrait gallery of little-known heroines that will appeal to any reader interested in civil rights and women's history, and she explores the psychology behind the relationships between men and women, black and white, throughout a watershed period in American history. (Feb.) Forecast: With two distinct markets—Af-Am and women's studies—this book presents a market opportunity as well as a challenge. Boosted by the inspiring cover image, vigorous targeting to both markets could result in admirable sales. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

FREEDOM'S DAUGHTERS IS AN AMAZING NON FICTION BOOK. I AM 84 AND NOW REALIZE HOW MUCH I DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT OUR COUNTRY'S QUIET PAST. I DID KNOW ABOUT ROSA PARKS AND THAT THERE WERE OTHERS BUT I AM ASTOUNDED TO LEARN HOW MUCH ELSE WAS GOING ON. BEING A NORTHERNER I KNEW FROM HISTORY BOOKS ABOUT THE AWFUL INSTITUTION OF SLAVERY BUT I TRULY DID NOT KNOW HOW EXTENSIVE IT WAS THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH AND NORTH AT TIMES. ALSO. IT WAS ACCEPTED SO FEW GAVE IT MUCH THOUGHT AS TO ITS HORRIBLE SIDE- NOT ONLY THE WORK THAT WAS BEATEN INTO THE SLAVES- BUT THE DAY TO DAY DEGRADATION OF THE DAILY LIVES, ESPECIALLY SEXUAL. THIS IS A MUST EYE OPENING BOOK FOR SLAVERY STILL HAS ITS FINGERS INTO OUR LIVES-. HOW MANY STILL WORK IN WELL BELOW STANDARDS AND HOURS. READ IT. WE DID WELL BUT STILL HAVE FAR TO GO IN SEEING THAT ALL AMERICANS CAN CHEER OUR STANDARDS.

This is one of the better books that I have read on the Civil Rights movement in the United States. The perspective taken is that of the heretofore briefly mentioned female contributions and leadership to the cause. One hears much of Dr. King and others, this book revealed the blatant

sexism with which the women had to contend in order to achieve their goals. It was a surprise to learn that so many of the most esteemed male leaders were so unenlightened when it came to women's participation in the movement. Just as African Americans were fighting the fight of their lives to achieve equality, the women of the movement were fighting a battle upon 2 fronts - racism and sexism. It is remarkable to read the descriptions of the various women, their competency is unquestioned, without them much less would have been achieved. One is left with the feeling of sadness that so much brilliance and talent was put-down and brushed aside by the male members of the Civil Rights Movement. These women should have been every bit as well known as Abernathy, King and the rest. There are many mentions of women who were crucial to the movement who have receded into the mists of time. This is a shame. This is one of the very best books that I have read of the struggles and achievements of the Civil Rights movement. I recommend this book most highly to all. In particular to those interested in the struggles inherent in the fight for not only the rights of African-Americans, but also for the rights of all women, everywhere.

This history may be the best one written about the Civil Rights Movement. It certainly affords the reader a special perspective correcting the imbalance in others. The events unfold, the characters reveal themselves, and the politics astound in an intertwined masterful way. For those who were there, this study should be a great reminder (like Circle of Trust). For those who are too young to have any direct memories, this book should inspire hope, commitment, and new activity.

Great knowledge.

Very enlightening!

Not written by someone who experienced the civil rights movement as a 'daughter' but a very good analysis of the climate and the historical attitudes that created the barriers between races.

good experience

Lynne Olson brings to life the lives of countless unsung heroes. Inspirational stories of courage and stamina.

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