



To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City

Martha Biondi

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The story of the civil rights movement typically begins with the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955 and culminates with the 1965 voting rights struggle in Selma. But as Martha Biondi shows, a grassroots struggle for racial equality in the urban North began a full ten years before the rise of the movement in the South. This story is an essential first chapter, not only to the southern movement that followed, but to the riots that erupted in northern and western cities just as the civil rights movement was achieving major victories.

Biondi tells the story of African Americans who mobilized to make the war against fascism a launching pad for a postwar struggle against white supremacy at home. Rather than seeking integration in the abstract, black New Yorkers demanded first-class citizenship--jobs for all, affordable housing, protection from police violence, access to higher education, and political representation. This powerful local push for economic and political equality met broad resistance, yet managed to win several landmark laws barring discrimination and segregation.

To Stand and Fight demonstrates how black New Yorkers launched the modern civil rights struggle and left a rich legacy.

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