



Want to Start a Revolution?: Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle

By Jeanne Theoharis, Komozi Woodard

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The story of the black freedom struggle in America has been overwhelmingly male-centric, starring leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and Huey Newton. With few exceptions, black women have been perceived as supporting actresses; as behind-the-scenes or peripheral activists, or rank and file party members. But what about Vicki Garvin, a Brooklyn-born activist who became a leader of the National Negro Labor Council and guide to Malcolm X on his travels through Africa? What about Shirley Chisholm, the first black Congresswoman?

From Rosa Parks and Esther Cooper Jackson, to Shirley Graham DuBois and Assata Shakur, a host of women demonstrated a lifelong commitment to radical change, embracing multiple roles to sustain the movement, founding numerous groups and mentoring younger activists. Helping to create the groundwork and continuity for the movement by operating as local organizers, international mobilizers, and charismatic leaders, the stories of the women profiled in **Want to Start a Revolution?** help shatter the pervasive and imbalanced image of women on the sidelines of the black freedom struggle.

Contributors: Margo Natalie Crawford, Prudence Cumberbatch, Johanna Fernández, Diane C. Fujino, Dayo F. Gore, Joshua Guild, Gerald Horne, Ericka Huggins, Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest, Joy James, Erik McDuffie, Premilla Nadasen, Sherie M. Randolph, James Smethurst, Margaret Stevens, and Jeanne Theoharis.

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- Sales Rank: #379480 in Books
- Brand: Brand: NYU Press
- Published on: 2009-12-01
- Released on: 2009-12-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.00" h x .91" w x 6.00" l, .93 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 370 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"This book is an important intervention in the historiography of US Black movements, strongly asserting the centrality of women in a broad range of Black liberation struggles."

-Rachel Herzing, *leftturn.org*

"By centering radical black women, **Want to Start a Revolution?** shatters the artificial boundaries separating civil rights, black power, and feminist ideologies and movements, generating an expanded history of black radicalism and conveying the centrality of African-American women to the black freedom struggle and social justice movements more broadly. This collection will undoubtedly inspire an outpouring of much-needed new scholarship, adding to our collective knowledge and offering new frameworks for grappling with this history."

-Emilye Crosby, author of *A Little Taste of Freedom: The Black Freedom Struggle in Claiborne County, Mississippi*

"As the editors and contributors of this volume convincingly insist, we must reconsider what we think we know of civil rights, black power activism, and post-World War II feminism . . . Expansive and inclusive are the terms that best describe this collection."

-Katherine Mellon Charron, *Journal of American History*

"This noteworthy collection returns women activists to their place at the center of American radicalism. In the spirit of the radical women it profiles, **Want to Start a Revolution?** promises to educate, invigorate, excite, and inspire."

-Anne M. Valk, author of *Radical Sisters: Second-Wave Feminism and Black Liberation in Washington, D.C.*

About the Author

Jeanne Theoharis is Professor of Political Science at Brooklyn College, City University of New York and co-editor (with Komozi Woodard) of *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements* (NYU Press).

Komozi Woodard is Professor of American History, Public Policy, and Africana Studies at Sarah Lawrence College and author of *A Nation within a Nation: Amiri Baraka and Black Power Politics*.

Dayo F. Gore is Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies and Critical Gender Studies at the University of California, San Diego and has previously taught at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. She is the co-editor (with Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard) of *Want to Start a Revolution? Radical Women in the Black Freedom Struggle* (NYU Press, 2009).

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