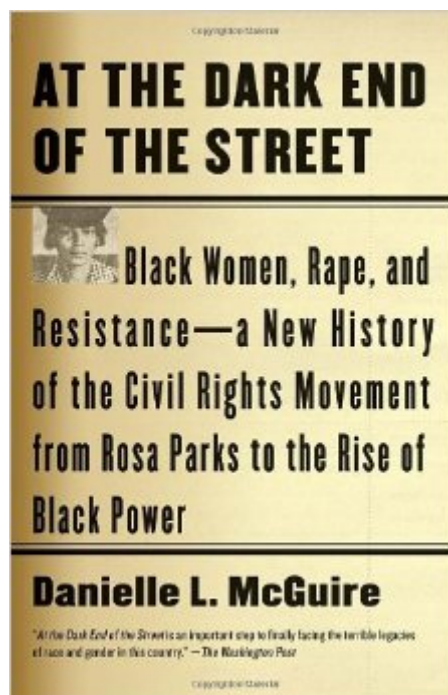


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At The Dark End Of The Street: Black Women, Rape, And Resistance--A New History Of The Civil Rights Movement From Rosa Parks To The Rise Of Black Power



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 to Abbeville. Her name was Rosa Parks. In taking on this case, Parks launched a movement that ultimately changed the world. The author gives us the never-before-told history of how the civil rights movement began; how it was in part started in protest against the ritualistic rape of black women by white men who used economic intimidation, sexual violence, and terror to derail the freedom movement; and how those forces persisted unpunished throughout the Jim Crow era when white men assaulted black women to enforce rules of racial and economic hierarchy. Black women's protests against sexual assault and interracial rape fueled civil rights campaigns throughout the South that began during World War II and went through to the Black Power movement. The Montgomery bus boycott was the baptism, not the birth, of that struggle. At the Dark End of the Street describes the decades of degradation black women on the Montgomery city buses endured on their way to cook and clean for their white bosses. It reveals how Rosa Parks, by 1955 one of the most radical activists in Alabama, had had enough. "There had to be a stopping place," she said, "and this seemed to be the place for me to stop being pushed around." Parks refused to move from her seat on the bus, was arrested, and, with fierce activist Jo Ann Robinson, organized a one-day bus boycott. The protest, intended to last twenty-four hours, became a yearlong struggle for dignity and justice. It broke the back of the Montgomery city bus lines and bankrupted the company. We see how and why Rosa Parks, instead of becoming a leader of the movement she helped to start, was turned into a symbol of virtuous black womanhood, sainted and celebrated for her quiet dignity, prim demeanor, and middle-class propriety—her radicalism all but erased. And we see as well how thousands of black women whose courage and fortitude helped to transform America were reduced to the footnotes of history. A controversial, moving, and courageous book; narrative history at its best. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

For many years, we've been taught the comforting narrative of the civil rights movement as a series of nonviolent protests, led by ministers, that so moved the hearts of northern white America that the courts and the government ruled and legislated white supremacy out of existence. Danielle McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street* rewrites the story, affirms the pivotal role of black women in the freedom movement, and locates its origins in the most horrific realities of the Jim Crow south. It's a gripping, essential read for anyone who wants to understand the forces that drove the movement into high gear in the 1950s and '60s: namely, the night-riding ritual of white-on-black rape and the decades-long struggle of black women to stand up to these attacks when the police and the courts would not. McGuire traces this struggle back a decade before the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott through the efforts of none other than Rosa Parks--whose "tired feet" became a movement symbol that overshadowed her militancy--to investigate and publicize Alabama rape cases as an NAACP field secretary. McGuire powerfully relates the story of violence and resistance and sacrifice and triumph over 30 years, into the 1970s, and does a masterful job of setting the record straight. If you're at all interested in understanding why this country had to change, how it did change, and who changed it, *At the Dark End of the Street* is an absolute must-read.

I could not put it down -- a powerful proof that the Southern black women's movement worked for decades to make the Rosa Parks Moment happen most powerfully, and to make the realizing of King's Dreams possible to start happening meaningfully as soon as he uttered them. Without those groups, the economically profitable practice of treating humans like animals [or worse] could have

spread across the whole world of commerce and become irredeemably entrenched, and "liberty and justice for all" would have remained a lie on the lips of every one of us white Americans -- a lie that we renewed every time we pledged allegiance to our flag. These women showed us a path upon which we could rescue our own morality from the filthiest level of quality, and they put a bright light on the truth that folks who witness evil and do nothing become defacto participants in that evil -- guilty of doing nothing about states of ours that called the privilege-of-raping black women a fringe benefit for police officers and bus drivers; guilty of giving that privilege also to every morally empty white man or teenager by assuring them zero punishment. A great book by a marvelously careful author who wrote with super clarity, and did research and documentation that -- in footnotes -- made credibility a sure thing. I saw zero 'spin'. Buying from was my quickest and least expensive way to buy, and their delivery to me was -- just barely -- within their promised 14 day time spread. All in all I give my top rating.

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!

For years, I have read mostly fiction because, at the end of a day of working and chores and such, I usually want to read something that is lovely and that rolls along, frankly, without much effort. I want to visit another world and peer into other lives. At best, I want to be inspired. At worst, I want to be entertained and to not be annoyed by poorly written prose. Through the years, because I want my reading to inform my perception of the real world, I have gravitated more and more toward fiction that is written in order to illuminate a particular time or an actual human struggle. Although Danielle McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street* is a solidly researched history book (with an attendant fat section of fascinating endnotes) it met all of my requirements, and impressed me enough that I am taking the time to recommend it to you. It is beautifully written and zips along, lining up stories that

lead naturally one to the other. Each evening, as with a good novel, I was anxious to get back to the book to see what was happening to its protagonists. This book deals with a harsh and real world, but peoples that world with women who inspire through their willingness to make their tragedies public, and to tell truth to power even though that power could reload and hurt them, and those they loved, again and again. I hope that McGuire's book will be read widely, because it will challenge the Great Man narratives that predominate in our public telling of the civil rights movement and help us to recognize the potential that ordinary people, speaking bravely and honestly, can have to change the course of history. But perhaps my favorite aspect of this brutal but uplifting history is that it illuminates the power of testimony as a personal and social and political act.

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