



Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950

By Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore

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“Remarkable . . . an eye-opening book [on] the freedom struggle that changed the South, the nation, and the world.” ?*Washington Post*

The civil rights movement that looms over the 1950s and 1960s was the tip of an iceberg, the legal and political remnant of a broad, raucous, deeply American movement for social justice that flourished from the 1920s through the 1940s. This rich history of that early movement introduces us to a contentious mix of home-grown radicals, labor activists, newspaper editors, black workers, and intellectuals who employed every strategy imaginable to take Dixie down. In a dramatic narrative Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore deftly shows how the movement unfolded against national and global developments, gaining focus and finally arriving at a narrow but effective legal strategy for securing desegregation and political rights. 45 illustrations

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Yale historian Gilmore turns a wide lens on the battle against Jim Crow in this worthy if overstuffed collective biography of the black and white Southern activists whose work before the larger Civil Rights movement constitute its neglected, forgotten or repressed origins. Expanding the temporal and geographical boundaries of the fight for racial equality, Gilmore's scholarship considers international racial politics and traces a progression from 1920s Communists, who joined forces in the late 1930s with a radical left to form a Southern popular front, to the 1940s grassroots activists. Gilmore (*Who Were the Progressives?*) lavishes attention on the first American-born black Communist, Lovett Fort-Whiteman, who died in a Siberian gulag in 1939; and on FDR-era civil rights activist Pauli Murray, distinguished by her fight against segregation at the University of North Carolina in 1939 and her involvement in the defense of Virginia sharecropper Odell Walker, ultimately executed for killing his white landlord. Gilmore's sweeping, fresh consideration of pre-movement civil rights activity, with its links to both the exportation of American racism and the importation of Communist egalitarianism, is full of informative gems, but the mining is left to the reader. (*Jan.*)

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Review

Painstakingly researched and vividly told, *Defying Dixie* is, by any standard, a formidable achievement. "

Introduces scores of dedicated, colorful and sometimes eccentric dreamers and agitators. "

About the Author

Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore is the Peter V. and C. Vann Woodward Professor of History, African American Studies, and American Studies at Yale University. Her research interests include twentieth-century U.S. history; African American history since 1865; U.S. women's and gender history since 1865; history of the American South; and reform movements. Her publications include Norton's *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*, which was one of the American Library Association's Notable Books and the Washington Post's Best Books of 2008, and she edited *Who Were the Progressives?* and co-edited *Jumpin' Jim Crow: Southern Politics from Civil War to Civil Rights*. Her first book, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920*, won the Frederick Jackson Turner Award, the James A. Rawley Prize, the Julia Cherry Spruill Prize, and the Heyman Prize.

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