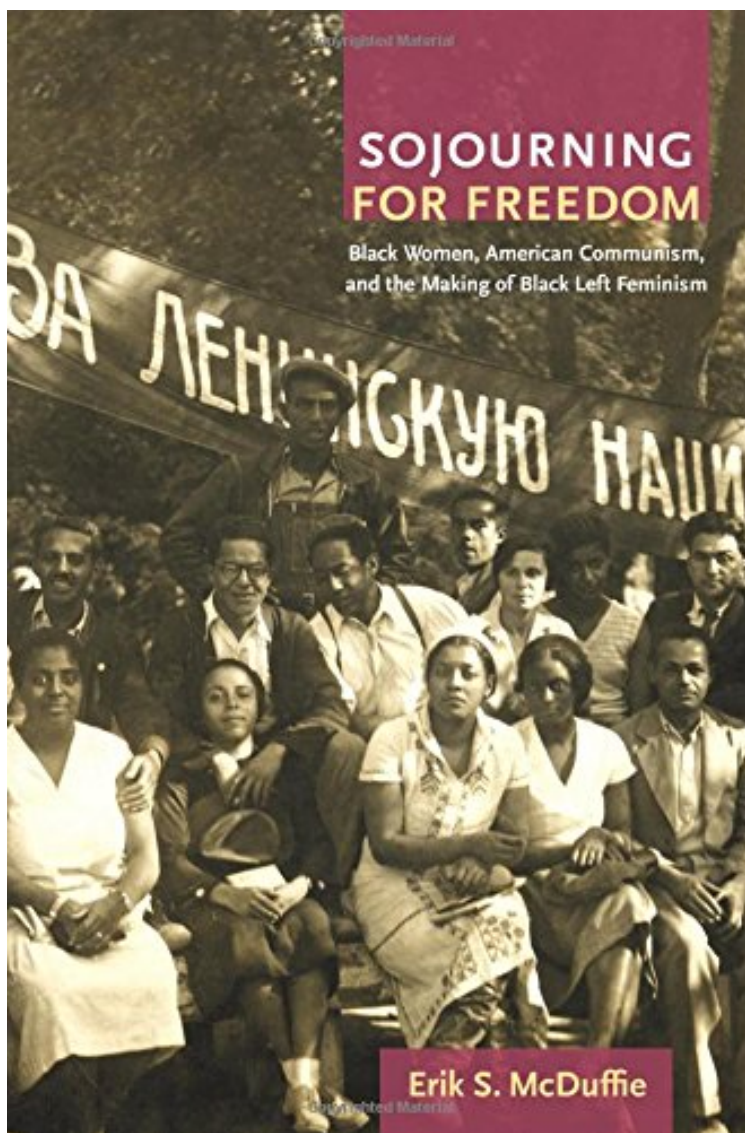


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Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism

Erik S. McDuffie

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Erik S. McDuffie : Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism:

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following review helpful. excellent conditionBy Andrew ClarkeI am very happy. it arrived in excellent condition! it arrived in very good time. i cant complain about anything. and to top it off it made for a good read!3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Demonstrates the Role of Intersectionality in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1920s-1940sBy RDDIn "Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism", Dr. Erik S. McDuffie writes, "By tracing black women radicals' lives, this book recovers 'black left feminism,' a path-breaking brand of feminist politics that centers working-class women by combining black nationalist and American Communist Party (CPUSA) positions on race, gender, and class with black women radicals' own lived experiences" (p. 3). McDuffie demonstrates that "the Communist Left served as a principal site and viable alternative for black women radicals to agitate for black freedom and black women's dignity outside of women's clubs, the church, and civil rights and black nationalist groups" (p. 3). As part of their political activity, many of the black women activists visited the Soviet Union during the 1920s. McDuffie writes, "Sojourning to the Soviet Union was crucial in cultivating black left feminism. The Soviet Union served as a political terrain where black Communist women forged their 'New Woman' sensibility and a 'black women's international' that was committed to building transnational alliances with women from around the world...Transformed by their Soviet experiences, they returned home more committed than ever to fighting for black freedom, black women's dignity and rights, and socialism" (p. 53). In this way, McDuffie highlights the role of international communism in shaping the civil rights movement of the 1920s-1940s. All of that changed, however, following McCarthyism and the red scare. The Sojourners for Truth and Justice, the group from whom McDuffie derives the name of his book, represent the last gasp of communist-inspired Black Left Feminism prior to the emergence of the 1960s Civil Rights movement. McDuffie argues, "The demise of the Sojourners provides an example of the destructive impact of anti-Communism and Communist sectarianism on black left feminism during the early 1950s" (p. 182). McDuffie writes, "The legacy of the red scare and a generational divide did shroud [black left feminism's] legacy from some young black feminists" (p. 209). Despite this divide, the rhetoric and methods of black left feminism continued on, embodied in Angela Y. Davis and Esther Cooper Jackson. McDuffie's monograph covers a critical time in the long civil rights movement and shows how intersectionality played a key role in activists' understanding of their work.

Sojourning for Freedom portrays pioneering black women activists from the early twentieth century through the 1970s, focusing on their participation in the U.S. Communist Party (CPUSA) between 1919 and 1956. Erik S. McDuffie considers how women from diverse locales and backgrounds became radicalized, joined the CPUSA, and advocated a pathbreaking politics committed to black liberation, women's rights, decolonization, economic justice, peace, and international solidarity. McDuffie explores the lives of black left feminists, including the bohemian world traveler Louise Thompson Patterson, who wrote about the triple exploitation of race, gender, and class; Esther Cooper Jackson, an Alabama-based civil rights activist who chronicled the experiences of black female domestic workers; and Claudia Jones, the Trinidad-born activist who emerged as one of the Communist Party's leading theorists of black women's exploitation. Drawing on more than forty oral histories collected from veteran black women radicals and their family members, McDuffie examines how these women negotiated race, gender, class, sexuality, and politics within the CPUSA. In *Sojourning for Freedom*, he depicts a community of radical black women activist intellectuals who helped to lay the foundation for a transnational modern black feminism.

Radical black women had to challenge both the CP's sexism and its racism, and McDuffie provides a judicious and finely tuned analysis of blackwomen's complicated relationship with the Party. . . . One of the great breakthroughs of McDuffie's book is his careful examination of personal testimonies, which like any narratives, demand analysis. - Mary Helen Washington, *Womens of Books*