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Main content

Article Preview :

Historian Martha Biondi's 2012 book entitled *The Black Revolution on Campus* (University of California Press, 2012, 366 pp. ISBN 9780520296224) provides accounts of Black student activism on college and university campuses throughout the United States. The Associate Professor of African American Studies and History at Northwestern University explores selected college and university campuses as case studies, chronicling the power and impact of Black student activism in the late 60s. Using archival research and oral histories, Biondi's 278-page work provides insight into how Black students revolutionized higher education through their protests, strikes, and seizures of buildings towards the fulfillment of their demands.

For Biondi, "This dramatic explosion of militant activism set in motion a period of conflict, crackdown, negotiation, and reform that profoundly transformed college life. At stake was the very mission of higher education". (1) She concludes the book with a discursive analysis of "What Happened to Black Studies?" where she argues against the standardization of the curriculum in academic units in favor of the flexibility of curriculum, theories, and approaches.

The book divides into eight chapters sandwiched between an Introduction and Conclusion. After introducing the book, chapter one explores the socio-political and historical climate, giving rise to Black student activism on campus. Chapter's two through five examine Black student activism at specific colleges and universities. Finally, chapters six, seven, and eight discuss the rise, successes, and challenges of Black Studies on and off campus. Biondi is sure to include external as well as internal challenges to Black Studies as a discipline and its departments and programs.

From the beginning, Biondi is clear on the inaccuracies of calling this period of activism a revolution. She illustrates how the Black student activist were referring to the moment as a revolution, even noting that *Ebony* magazine bought into the idea of a Black Revolution when they published a special issue in 1969 entitled "The Black Revolution". (2) However, Biondi illustrates that neither the students' aims nor achievements fulfilled the traditional sense of revolution. That is, seizing power and taking control facilitating socio-political shifts in society and/ or nation. For Biondi, the reference to a Black revolution on campus sheds light on the power to assert agency and reform higher education. She says, "The title of this book hopes to capture the sweeping nature of many of their demands". She continues, "the audacity of the children of sharecroppers and factory workers in asserting a right to shape these institutions was in a sense revolutionary". (3) For Biondi, to varying degrees the "desegregation of institutions of higher education in the American North and West was won by the children of southern migrants and constitutes another legacy of the twentieth century's massive internal migration". (4) Therefore, what was revolutionary was not the socio-political movement or historical moment on these campuses per se, but the new and different Black students and their politics and agenda's separated them from previous generations. For Wayne Glasker, "this 'revolution' rejected the earlier sense of shame and stigma attached to blackness...

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This book makes a major contribution to the current debate on Ethnic Studies, access to higher education, and opportunity for all. Read More. Publisher 1. Moving toward Blackness: The Rise of Black Power on Campus. 2. A Revolution Is Beginning: The Strike at San Francisco State. 3. A Turbulent Era of Transition: Black Students and a New Chicago. 4. Brooklyn College Belongs to Us: The Transformation of Higher Education in New York City. 5. Toward a Black University: Radicalism, Repression, and Reform at Historically Black Colleges. 6. The Counterrevolution on Campus: Why Was Black Studies So Controversial? 7. The Black Revolution Off-Campus. 8. What Happened to Black Studies? Conclusion. 7. The Black Revolution Off-Campus 8. What Happened to Black Studies? Conclusion: Reflections on the Movement and Its Legacy Notes Selected Bibliography Acknowledgments Photo Credits Index. Illustrated. Washington Spectator, Biondi's book is a very powerful chronicle of the struggle and strategizing that moved seemingly immovable institutions toward change., The most comprehensive account of black studies founding generations. . . . [A] nuanced telling of the creation of black studies programs., Thoroughly researched, beautifully written., and a fascinating piece of history . . . an exceptional piece of scholarship, and a book greatly worth reading. Lccn. 2012-001211. You can write a book review and share your experiences. Other readers will always be interested in your opinion of the books you've read. Whether you've loved the book or not, if you give your honest and detailed thoughts then people will find new books that are right for them. 1. A thirst for blood: the true story of California's vampire killer.