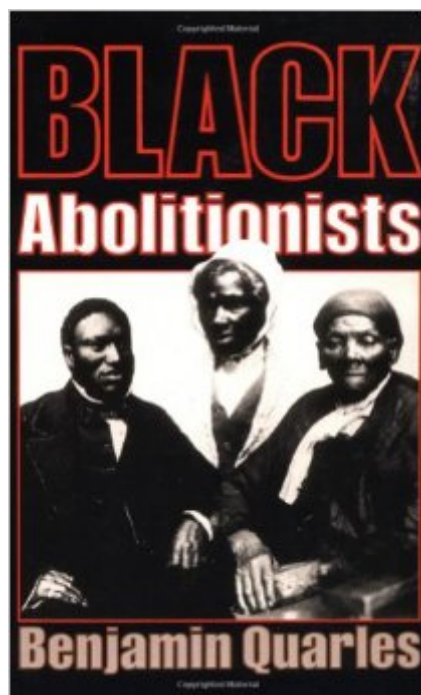


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Black Abolitionists (Da Capo Paperback)



Synopsis

While much is known about the white men and women who were involved in the anti-slavery movement, the black abolitionists have been largely ignored. This book, written by one of America's leading black historians, sets the record straight. As Benjamin Quarles shows, blacks were anything but passive in the abolitionist movement. Many of the pioneers of abolition were black; dozens of black preachers and writers actively promoted the cause; black organizations were founded to support their brothers; black ambassadors for freedom crossed the Atlantic; blacks were instrumental in the operation of the Underground Railroad. Quarles puts it eloquently: "To the extent that America had a revolutionary tradition [the black American] was its protagonist no less than its symbol."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I recently reviewed this exceptional book for a college history class: Benjamin Quarles did an exceptional job in supporting his well-balanced and non-biased argument that even though widely neglected in history, the Negro played a significant role in the abolitionists crusade. Quarles's use of Primary sources made this non-biased argument possible. A quick summary of the book is as follows: The "new school" movement began in the late 1820s to the early 30s, and it gave free Negroes the opportunity to publicly speak their views on slavery and the equality of blacks. Even though not all blacks were abolitionists, their general attitude was, as John Scoble stated in 1853,

"...[to be] true to their brethren in bonds...and to remain by them whatever the cost" (p.7). Whether he be free-born or slave-born, man or woman, an active abolitionist or a supporter of abolition, the Negro was true to his brother in slavery. Evidence of this was shown in Negro reformist sheets, and narratives written by former slaves. The kinship Negroes felt toward the slave was also shown in the formation of anti-slavery societies, in the trips to England in hopes of gaining anti-slavery support, and Negro participation in The Underground Railroad. This book is an excellent account of the Negro participation in the abolitionist movement, long neglected in history. The fact that this book has a well-balanced, greatly supported, easy to read, and truthful argument, makes it exceptional. Quarles said it best when he noted, "To the extent that America had a revolutionary tradition, [the Negro] was its protagonist no less than its symbol" (p.249). One will never feel the same about the Negroes' union in their struggle for freedom and equality, after he reads, *Black Abolitionists*, by Benjamin Quarles.

I've read several books by Benjamin Quarles and each one is really fascinating. He does a great job of presenting the full story with well documented history from original sources. This book presents forgotten heroes with the courage to rise up against the incredible evil. He traces the progress of black abolitionists as they became early civil rights leaders. Our schools really need these stories of people like David Walker who published a book that caused the states of South Carolina, Georgia and more to pass laws against free speech because he had told the slaves to rise up and serve no master but Christ. There's so much more in this powerful book which should be required reading for anyone studying Civil War history.

Quarles virtually founded the history of black abolitionism, and he set the bar very high. Before *Black Abolitionists*, the story of antislavery was viewed almost completely as a matter of selfless, dedicated--or fanatical--whites, with blacks in the roles of desperate fugitives or bit players. Quarles up-ended the narrative and demonstrated that blacks were the key actors, with whites--with very few exceptions--taking at best supporting roles. This is an essential starting point for anyone interested in the antislavery movement or 19th-century U.S. society and reform.

Benjamin Quarles set out to put in writing everything he knew about the African-Americans who participated in the abolitionist movements in the USA before the Civil War. He distinguished two stages, one, a more compromising, gradualist bunch, who petered out before 1830; the other a much more fiery collection of groups that would brook no compromise. The book tells, in far more

detail than the average reader would like to know, about the comings and goings of the various black abolitionists, their thoughts, and struggle. It will not surprise us, today, that there were many African-Americans who wished to see their brethren free. It would be weird if there weren't ! But in the 1960s, when Quarles wrote, such knowledge and such a surety was not a given thing. People still used the word "Negro" and condescension still roamed the streets of America like a rotten fog. White men were seen as the chief instigators of the anti-slavery struggle. Well, it is certainly true that they got the lion's share of credit ! Quarles decided to set the record straight and he has certainly done that. If you need to do research on the details of black abolitionist history, you have come to the right place. This will be a five star book for you. He proves his point. For the rest of us, perhaps there are too many details which we cannot remember, and perhaps the huge number of names and events will overwhelm us. That's why I've given it only two stars, not because I want to dump on this book.

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