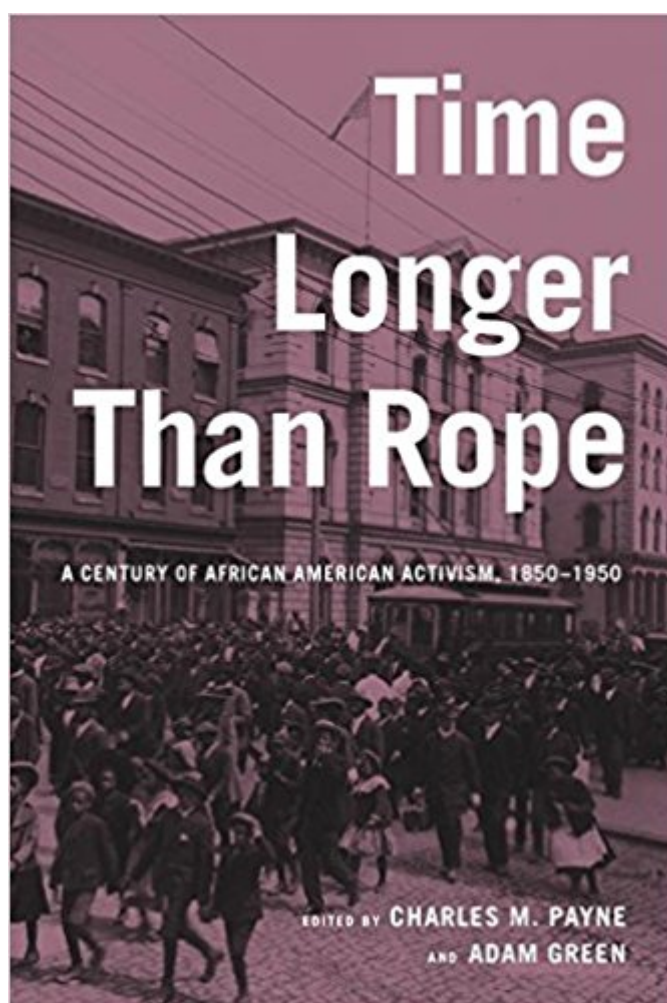


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# Time Longer Than Rope: A Century Of African American Activism, 1850-1950



## Synopsis

The story of the civil rights movement is well-known, popularized by both the media and the academy. Yet the version of the story recounted time and again by both history books and PBS documentaries is a simplified one, reduced to an inspirational but ultimately facile narrative framed around Dr. King, the Kennedys, and the redemptive days of Montgomery and Memphis, in which black individuals become the rescued survivors. This story renders the mass of black people invisible, refusing to take seriously everyday people whose years of persistent struggle often made the big events possible. *Time Longer than Rope* unearths the ordinary roots of extraordinary change, demonstrating the depth and breadth of black oppositional spirit and activity that preceded the civil rights movement. The diversity of activism covered by this collection extends from tenant farmers' labor reform campaign in the 1919 Elaine, Arkansas massacre to Harry T.

Moore's leadership of a movement that registered 100,000 black Floridians years before Montgomery, and from women's participation in the Garvey movement to the changing meaning of the Lincoln Memorial. Concentrating on activist efforts in the South, key themes emerge, including the under appreciated importance of historical memory and community building, the divisive impact of class and sexism, and the shifting interplay between individual initiative and structural constraints. More than simply illuminating a hitherto marginalized fragment of American history, *Time Longer than Rope* provides a crucial pre-history of the modern civil rights movement. In the process, it alters our entire understanding of African American activism and the very meaning of "civil rights."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Readers will find this volume a helpful companion to capturing an under explored area of black activism from the slavery era to the mid-twentieth century. These essays are especially helpful in assessing the rural historical experiences of African Americans and advancing our common historical understanding and knowledge on key aspects of this element of the black experience.”-The Journal of Southern History

“A comprehensive collection of essays and narratives.”-Ebony

“The essays that make up *Time Longer Than Rope* skillfully express the variety, depth, and resilience of African Americans’ resistance in the effort to achieve political freedom and greater economic opportunities and to maintain viable intraracial community associations to fight for equality. A useful tool that will facilitate student awareness of the varied and long-term struggle for black freedom in America.”-The Journal of American History

“An exciting and much needed anthology. Collectively, this astute selection of provocative essays and the powerful introduction effectively challenge worn frameworks and outmoded narratives of the civil rights movement. Pushing the time line back to before the Civil War, Charles M. Payne and Adam Green complicate our understanding of how everyday people transformed their own lives and changed this nation’s history. This splendid volume is a vital contribution to African American history and underscores the importance of dissent in America.”-Darlene Clark Hine, co-author of *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*

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Charles M. Payne is Sally Dalton Robinson Professor of African American studies, History and Sociology at Duke University. He is the author of the prize-winning *I’ve Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*. Adam Green is Assistant Professor of History and American Studies at New York University.

Excellent articles and great insight into the struggle against discrimination and segregation.

As every American learns in elementary school, after having been rescued from slavery by the Union Army during the Civil War, Black people waited nearly a decade before starting to fight for their civil rights under the leadership of Martin Luther King Jr. This book of 16 outstanding essays goes a long way towards correcting this horrendous error in our national "remembering," demonstrating that Blacks began their struggle for freedom and human dignity the moment the first slaves arrived here in bondage. Some authors deal specifically with the process of creating (and sanitizing) collective memory, our experience of the past (memory) vs how we organize it (history.) For example, the mere title of Peter Wood's "Slave Labor Camps in Early America" puts a new spin on our romanticised image of the genteel Plantation. Scott Sandage's "A Marble House Divided" explores the political life of the Lincoln Memorial as a "memory site." Other essays focus a critical lens on specific episodes, such as the rise of Black radicalism in the South immediately following the Civil War, the voter registration movement in Florida 1919-1920, or intellectual pan-African feminism embodied by the first and second wives of Marcus Garvey. A thought provoking and much needed collection.

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