

## Civil Rights for Beginners

**Paul Von Blum**

**Frank Reynoso, Illustrator**

For Beginners LLC (Jan 12, 2016)

Softcover \$15.95 (176pp)

978-1-934389-89-8

*With its engaging graphic novel-style illustrations and comprehensive details, this is an illuminating and balanced introduction to civil rights efforts.*

*Civil Rights for Beginners*, part of the For Beginners series, is a thorough account of the history of civil rights movements, from slave revolts in the late 1800s through to the Black Lives Matter grassroots campaign that began in 2013, highlighting well-known icons such as Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Tubman, and lesser-known figures such as Octavius Catto and John Hope.

In this comprehensive history of civil rights in the United States, Paul Von Blum, professor of African American studies and communication studies at UCLA, shows how efforts across the decades are interconnected. He makes the material accessible, even for young audiences, by exploring many issues and leaders in just enough detail to demonstrate the impact of each. Ideal for educational settings, the graphic-style illustrations by Frank Reynoso further engage and illuminate.

Von Blum details different campaign tactics, some militant, some nonviolent, in a neutral way, not suggesting one was better than another. Some of the more militant tactics, especially, are placed in context as a response to frustration. The balanced account acknowledges flaws in some approaches. For example, he mentions Marcus Garvey's stubbornness and lack of political vision, but without dismissing the impact of Garvey's efforts.

This account emphasizes that regardless of tactics and outcomes, all efforts contributed to the advancement of civil rights. By taking a "big picture" view of events and placing them in historical context, Von Blum explains how later movements were impacted by previous civil rights campaigns. He also explores the role of music, films, and literature in the civil rights movement, acknowledging the powerful role of popular culture in establishing and changing norms and perceptions.

All efforts are presented as an integral part of the movement and a precursor to contemporary civil rights efforts. The struggles of "agitational enterprises" are presented as worthwhile. While placing the movement in historical context, this account also conveys a message of empowerment to all those seeking their civil rights.

MARIA SIANO (Spring 2016)

*Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.*