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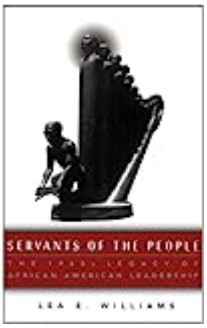

Lea E. Williams. *Servant of the People: The 1960s Legacy of African American Leadership.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998. x + 247 pp. $15.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-312-17684-6; $90.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-312-16372-3.

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Servant of the People is a collection of case studies on leadership. Lea Williams believes that by studying "servant leadership," i.e. "a selfless desire to be of service," one can draw universal lessons about leadership. Consequently, the author chose six leaders that "fit" this definition, all from the mainstream moderate Civil Rights movement between 1920 and 1975. Her choices are controversial in some ways, especially in who she leaves out.

Williams chose A. Philip Randolph, Frederick D. Patterson, Thurgood Marshall, Whitney M. Young Jr., Adam Clayton Powell, and Fannie Lou Hamer as her subjects. She does not explain why such notables as Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, John L. Lewis, James Farmer, Ella Baker, Diane Nash, Walter White, etc., were not chosen. With King and Malcolm, one suspects her rationale was overexposure, but the others are truly important examples of her concept of "servant leadership." She claims that she chose these people because they came from " black colleges, black churches, and moderate civil rights and social service organizations" (p. xi). Yet Fannie Lou Hamer does not fit this description, while a number of other possible choices would fit better. One can only surmise that these examples fit her model.

Williams analyzes how these leaders were formed and how events shaped them in particular to draw lessons for African American leadership in the 21st century. While the book is a credible set of biographies with a nice overview of African American leadership from Reconstruction to the 1970s, the analysis is not new or original. It is a collection that would work well in an undergraduate class on Civil Rights, but it is not a work for the serious researcher.

The book does a good job of reviewing (and synthesizing) some major themes in African American leadership studies within a very readable framework. *Servant of the People* discusses the familiar theme of the charismatic African American leader. This and other themes will be well known to anyone who has read Ogden Morris's *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement.* Williams' distinctive analysis emerges in Part V, where she argues that segregation led to the development of autocratic leaders who recognized the importance of being in control. Williams also argues that the larger forces that forged these leaders led to the development of different skills at different times. Despite these differences, however, the success of her subjects generally came from building diverse coalitions, planning effective strategies, grassroots-oriented (she uses the term "authentic") commitment, passion, and inclusiveness.

In her conclusion, where the author reviews major ideas from mainstream liberal and conservative leaders like Cornell West, Glenn Loury, and Shelby Steele, she

argues that the post 1970s Civil rights Movement needs local leaders. The most thoughtful argument here is an analysis of Farrakhan's impact at the Million Man March in 1995, and how the African American community should approach leaders who were anointed by it.

Professional Civil Rights scholars will wince at some of Williams' analysis, her choices of study, and a few mistakes in her facts. Historians may challenge her because five of the six case studies are male, traditional, autocratic leaders. If the author's intent was to promote local leadership, pre-1965 SNCC would seem to present more fertile ground for examples and lessons. Others will wonder why Williams did not examine leaders from Black Power groups in order to learn from their failures in creating sustainable local leadership. Indeed, Stokeley Carmichael, H. Rap Brown, and others fought with leaders like King from 1964 on about developing "authentic," grassroots leaders.

Henry Hampton's *Voices of Freedom* would have given Williams some interesting oral histories to analyze from people interested in, or who were, grassroots leaders. Sherrod Brown, Diane Nash, Medgar Evers, Daisy Bates, Rev. Jemision, E. D. Nixon, and a number of other possible choices less well-known than her group of national leaders would probably have served her purpose of defining future leadership strategies better, largely because Williams struggles to draw examples from her leaders (only Hamer was a grass roots activist). Williams' last chapter is a polemic; she draws no examples from the men on how to create and nurture local "authentic" leaders, which hurts her ability to support her thesis.

Williams uses autobiographies and biographies as her sources. As an Ed.D who currently serves as the Executive Director of the Women's Leadership Institute at Bennett College, she is well versed in the literature of leadership studies, and her analysis reflects this background. Williams is not a historian, though she uses history liberally in her case studies.

This is a very well written work, which will be useful for students of history, and researchers beginning to focus on the lives of these leaders in history or political science. Williams' work is a good starting point for more complex analysis of African American leadership.

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