



**Steve Estes.** *Charleston in Black and White: Race and Power in the South after the Civil Rights Movement.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 232 pp. \$29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-4696-2232-3.

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## Why Charleston (and the South) Matters after 1968

The historiography of the American South during the civil rights and Black Power eras has never been richer than it is today. Books covering the black freedom struggle in southern cities and rural areas are, of course, enough to fill entire libraries. Yet coverage of what happened after the late 1960s, when many civil rights activists, politicians, and citizens of all political stripes began to confront the legacy of the civil rights era in the South is just beginning to bear fruit as a subfield of southern history. Steve Estes's book, *Charleston in Black and White*, is a fine example of the maturing of this field of recent southern history.

Estes's book examines the history of the post-civil rights era through the history of Charleston, South Carolina, from the late 1960s until just after 2000. He argues that Charleston's history of adjusting to the rise of black political and cultural power in the city is indicative of a much larger trend in South Carolina and across the South. While Estes admits that part of his purpose for writing the book was understanding the hometown, he also sought to answer a question that has come to be asked by more historians over the last decade: "where have we gone since the civil rights movement, and where do we go from here" (p. 6)? His tracing of the politics of Charleston from the 1969 Charleston Hospital Workers's Strike through the longshoremen's strike of the early twenty-first century is a testament to how much Charleston is a stand-in for many struggles in the South

during the late twentieth century.

*Charleston in Black and White* approaches the history of Charleston through several case-study-like chapters, all linked together through Estes's appreciation of the changing dynamics of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation in Charleston and across the country. His scholarship shows the importance of covering smaller southern cities, and not just the political and cultural behemoths of Atlanta or the civil rights battlegrounds of such places as Birmingham. Charleston experienced the rise of black political power, war on drugs, and arguments over the place of women in modern society just as the rest of the nation did.

The significance of Estes's book should not be lost on anyone who does post-1960 American history, the history of the contemporary South, or African American history. By showing how the city of Charleston dealt with national problems on a local scale, *Charleston in Black and White* should inspire other historians to look at a wide range of southern cities during this same time period to help readers further understand the complicated, and intertwined, histories of race, gender, class, and politics during the 1970s and 1980s. The sources are a deep combing of archival sources across the state of South Carolina, coupled with over fifty oral history interviews. Together, they paint a detailed portrait of life in the Deep South in the shadow of Martin Luther King Jr. and the heights of the civil rights movement.

*Charleston in Black and White* deserves to be read in conjunction with such books as Kevin M. Kruse's *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (2005) and Matthew D. Lassiter's *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South*. Estes adds to their narrative of recent southern history by opening up a narrative about life in a historically significant, yet moderately sized, southern city. And in conjunction with newer works, such as Devin Fergus's *Liberalism, Black Power, and the Making of Modern American Politics, 1965-1980* (2009) and Kenneth Robert Janken's *The Wilmington Ten: Violence, Injustice, and the Rise of Black Politics in the 1970s* (2015), we are finally beginning to get a fuller picture of life in the South, regardless of the size of the city. In this sense, Estes's book is an essential read on recent southern history.

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