

GENDER

Pamela E. Brooks. *Boycotts, Buses and Passes: Black Women's Resistance in the U.S. South and South Africa*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008. xviii + 304 pp. Maps. Photographs. Notes. Index. \$29.95. Paper.

Boycotts, Buses, and Passes offers an intimate view into black women's resistance to apartheid and Jim Crow segregation laws. Based on oral histories and archival research, Pamela E. Brooks takes readers on a trans-Atlantic journey that sheds new light on familiar stories of black resistance by locating them within the lives of generations of ordinary women who share a diasporic identity. Despite obvious political economic, cultural, and demographic differences in the styles of black women's politicization in South Africa and the American South, Brooks identifies a number of similarities between them as well. From bus boycotts to anti-pass protests, she draws on an impressive collection of personal narratives to explore the gendered nature of racial domination, strategies of resistance, and the importance of family traditions in explaining women's political activism.

In the opening chapters Brooks explores the importance of women's upbringing in shaping their political consciousness. Unlike most researchers on black freedom struggles, she reaches back into precolonial and antebellum pasts to explain or contextualize later forms of resistance. She discusses women's centrality in familial structures and kinship ties throughout the nineteenth century. For example, she describes the everyday work lives, the reproductive lives, and the family lives of women enslaved in Alabama, including their experiences with Klan harassment. In the South African context, Brooks weaves together stories of family life, traditions, and gender relations across various African cultures in the period surrounding the first European contact and settlement. She shows that even under the most adverse conditions, women asserted their independence and strived to secure better futures for their children.

Brooks uses these early memories to frame women's initial experiences with urban life in the early twentieth century. She discusses how wage labor, participation in civic associations, and migration all led to new forms of social organization, and she shows the effects of different laws governing the movement of black women and men in both settings. In keeping with other comparative research, Brooks follows the parallel development of black labor exploitation and capitalist expansion concentrated in industrializing cities. However, her references to personal narratives allow her to construct a more intimate account of these larger processes, in a manner that underscores the role of earlier familial structures, traditions, and labor patterns in rural areas in explaining women's experiences in urban centers like Johannesburg and Montgomery. In doing so, Brooks reveals black women's power and positionality across diverse social, cultural, and physical geographies.

This discussion of women's adjustments to life in segregated cities, including the importance of civic organizations, anchors Brooks's later discussion of the personal and collective forms of resistance popularized in the 1950s and 1960s in both places. She shows how women saw themselves as personally invested in overthrowing the dual logics of race and gender that exercised undue influence over their ability to care for and provide for their families. In the radicalization of these ordinary women from different countries, one key similarity Brooks discusses lies in the importance of political organizations like the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), labor unions, and the Communist Party. Brooks considers women's complex role in these organizations, while also detailing the creation of new entities—such as the ANC's Women's League—designed explicitly to address the unique position of black women in a racist and sexist society.

Brooks's greatest contribution lies in her unique approach to comparative study. She skillfully presents personal accounts of everyday life and struggle against white rule across generations of women, inviting the reader to situate the political action of the 1950s and 1960s within trajectories of individual lives. In addition, Brooks locates their experiences and the freedom struggles within a global context, relating them to key external factors, including World Wars I and II, as well as to other anticolonial and democratic movements unfolding at the same time.

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Rogaia Mustafa Abusharaf. *Transforming Displaced Women in Sudan: Politics and the Body in a Squatter Settlement*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009. xii + 183 pp. Photographs. Notes. References. Index. \$55.00. Cloth. \$20.00. Paper.

This is a deeply flawed book about an important group of southern Sudanese women, namely those displaced from the southern Sudan to the shanty towns surrounding the Sudanese capital, Khartoum. Drawing on interviews conducted with almost fifty displaced women, the author sets out to represent these women's voices and agency as they devise gendered strategies of cultural adaptation that, she argues, promote and symbolize the multicultural harmony of a "New Sudan." The author presents her research within a framework of what she calls an urgent, public, humanitarian, and feminist anthropology, whose common denominator she defines as a victim- and women-centered analysis that aims at raising public awareness and influencing public policy.

Abusharaf's book falls short of these ambitious goals in a number of ways. First and crucially, she completely ignores the substantial and relevant schol-