

Shaw, Todd. *Now is the Time! Detroit Black Politics and Grassroots Activism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009. 288pp.

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Todd Shaw's *Now is the Time! Detroit Black Politics and Grassroots Activism* provides a detailed look into the resiliency and determination of grassroots activists arguing for affordable housing rights in Detroit, MI. Shaw's examination of grassroots advocacy is divided into two main eras. The first half of Shaw's text spans from 1933-1993 and focuses mainly on the development of grassroots activism in inner-city Detroit and the influence of the Coleman Young mayoral administration on black activists. The remainder of the book covers the years from 1993-2005 and focuses on activism after Young's time in office, specifically questioning how black grassroots activism has influenced housing politics within the city. Though his analysis of the post-Young years is important to the development of activism today, the real strength of Shaw's text comes in his detailed historical account of the development of black activism and housing initiatives from 1933-1993. His central focus on Detroit proves a useful backdrop for understanding how racialized politics often can be used for and against grassroots causes. In light of the recent economic decline of the city, Shaw's text provides an important reminder of both the historical significance of Detroit and of the potential for marginalized citizens to collaborate in times of economic duress.

A key contribution of the book is Shaw's Effective Black Activism Model (EBAM), a research framework aimed to help analyze the ways in which some black activists successfully organize within their communities. Throughout the text, Shaw refers to EBAM and specifically examines the timing (the moment), context (the social climate), and utility (the strategy) of activist efforts. For Shaw, it is not merely enough to examine the types of activities in which activists engage; in order to understand thoroughly the reason why activists act in specific ways on specific issues at specific times, one should utilize EBAM to examine all the factors that lead to effective change. EBAM also helps reveal the means through which activists

and other community leaders hold public officials accountable. As he argues, one cannot fully understand the current state of black activist politics within the United States without understanding the utility, timing, and context of previous movements. By using the EBAM framework to examine various examples of activist activity, Shaw is able to highlight the dynamics of black activism across government administrations within Detroit.

The first half of Shaw's text focuses on black activism from 1933-1993. Starting in the '30s, Shaw examines the ways in which a hostile post-war atmosphere created race-based housing divides within the city and sparked the first emergence of black grassroots organizing around issues of fair housing and race relations. Shaw then shifts his focus to examine black activism during the 1970s and specifically centers his analysis on activism under the administration of Mayor Coleman Young, who held the office from the early 1970s to the early 1990s. As Shaw explains, despite Young's appeal to both to white and black voters, activists still struggled to gain housing rights under an administration rooted in racially-motivated identity politics. Young's stance as the first black mayor appealed to black voters, but many of his political decisions angered the black activists seeking fair housing policies. The Detroit black community was thus torn by the desire to support a black candidate while simultaneously supporting their own political stance. Shaw spends considerable time in the first half of the book using his EBAM framework to examine the various ways in which Young's construction of black politics was both a hindrance as well as a help to black activists within Detroit.

The second half of Shaw's text focuses on activism from 1995-2005. Here, Shaw centers his analysis the fallout of black activism after Mayor Young's term as well as the future of black activism in the new millennium. It is in the latter portion of his book in which he argues that the current racial and class climate within the United States requires that scholars and politicians alike turn to activists in order to understand issues and community problems from the front-lines. He again relies on his EBAM framework in the second section to examine the various ways in which housing activism in other cities compares to that within Detroit. He concludes the text with a prediction for the future of black grassroots activism influenced by leaders such as Mayor Cory Booker and then-Senator Barack Obama. The last sentence summarizes the book's key argument: No matter what the future holds for the city of Detroit, it will be

grassroots activists, not politicians, who will create the most sustainable and just social change.

Shaw's text is significant for anyone interested in grassroots activism, issues of affordable housing, or the relationship between activism and the political sphere. The text is not inherently feminist, nor does Shaw utilize feminist theory; yet his analysis of the racialized and gendered aspects of 20th century black activism within Detroit provides a critical lens to consider issues many other social movement scholars may have overlooked. While Detroit does not have the same historical significance in the civil rights movement as Montgomery or Birmingham, Shaw clearly outlines the strength of the city as a prime locale for radical black activism and social justice campaigns. In addition, Shaw's text provides an overall analysis of the means through which activists and politicians contend with identity politics when mobilizing for a cause. Though many activists have argued that housing was not a raced but a classed issue, much of what occurred in Detroit was inherently connected to the racial tensions existing across neighborhoods. His chapter on the Save Our Spirit (SOS) coalition (a predominantly white organization with key black leaders) specifically demonstrates the difficulties activists faced while negotiating identity politics with essentialist government officials.

Ultimately, the crux of Shaw's work is EBAM, which can be taken up by future scholars working to examine activism across time periods or locales. In the end, Shaw reminds the reader of the continued necessity to give admission and recognition to the never-ending struggles of grassroots activists. As the title compels one to action, so does Shaw's analysis. In today's era of active citizenship and social volunteerism, Shaw's book leaves a textual legacy of those who actively engaged their communities and political leaders despite economic, gender, and racial divides.

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