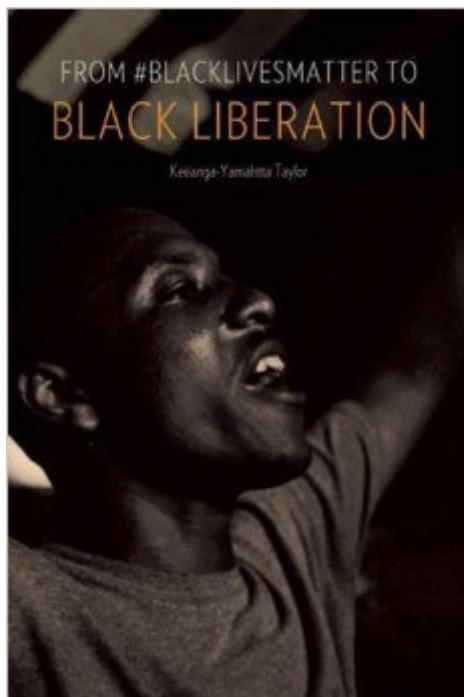


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From #BlackLivesMatter To Black Liberation



Synopsis

The eruption of mass protests in the wake of the police murders of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and Eric Garner in New York City have challenged the impunity with which officers of the law carry out violence against Black people and punctured the illusion of a postracial America. The Black Lives Matter movement has awakened a new generation of activists. In this stirring and insightful analysis, activist and scholar Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor surveys the historical and contemporary ravages of racism and persistence of structural inequality such as mass incarceration and Black unemployment. In this context, she argues that this new struggle against police violence holds the potential to reignite a broader push for Black liberation.

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Customer Reviews

Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor's book is, quite simply, a tour de force of contemporary political analysis. Uniting historical narrative with contemporary political polemic, Taylor develops an account of the trajectory of American racism that should be of interest to everyone who has taken part in or cheered on the explosive protests against racial injustice that have taken place in the last few years in the US. What sets Taylor's book apart from others on the subject, however, is how far she goes beyond simply documenting the seemingly endless dimensions of racial oppression in the United States, laying out not only a theory that explains its dynamics, but also contains implications for activists looking to contest it. Key to this is Taylor's understanding of the relationship between racism and American capitalism. She points out, for example, that racist ideologies like the "culture

of poverty" have a dual function: not only do they serve to scapegoat African Americans for the deprivations they suffer, but, by racializing poverty, they also conceal white poverty, and in the process obscure the way that poverty in the United States, for both the black and white poor, is produced by the structural dynamics of American capitalism itself. The implications of this insistent linking of capitalist accumulation and racial oppression are weighty: first, Taylor points out that the class differentiation that has taken place in the Black population since the Civil Rights Movement have meant that the contemporary insurgency against police violence will necessarily have a far different character than the movement of King, Baker, etc. The presence of a real black elite in cities like Baltimore means that when black protesters raise the slogan black lives matter, it is not going to be white racists like Bull Connor with whom they will be contending, but often quite liberal black politicians who have taken over the task of administering American capitalism in the urban centers. Second, and relatedly, Taylor's book suggests that challenging contemporary forms of racial oppression, from evictions to mass incarceration, will require directly challenging capitalism itself, contesting the free reign of the market. As she notes, the only social force with the power to take on this task is the working class itself. As such, there is a premium on winning workers, including white workers, to the politics of black liberation. This is just the barest sketch of the empirical detail and analytical richness of the book. There hasn't been a writer putting class politics on the agenda so forcefully in a long time, and the movement for black lives' prospects are better for this book being out.

This book should be read widely. It's a powerful, concise account of why the Black Lives Matter movement has erupted and why it's needed. The chapter on the limits of electoral politics is one of the best in the book. The section on the connections between municipal finance and criminal justice, of the way fines and fees compound the problem mass incarceration, is also extremely useful and lucid. This is a clear-eyed and morally righteous work informed by a deep understanding of history and social policy, one that patiently and painstakingly illustrates the ways racism and capitalism are intertwined. Ultimately Taylor presents a powerful argument for social movements, for building power outside of electoral politics that can take on structural inequities. I found myself underlining something on almost every page.

If it's not too big a contradiction, this superb book is one long, erudite, closely argued holler. It takes an unflinching look at race in the United States, covering the history of racism, the Civil Rights Movement, Black leadership, police brutality, the school-to-prison pipeline, the

disappointments of Obama's term of office, and the Black Lives Matter movement. In the process, it debunks the myth that Black deprivation is rooted in Black culture; instead, it highlights systemic abuses and injustice. Taylor's conclusions are measured and wise. We don't know where Black Lives Matter is headed — there is no visible path to follow — but we know that the hydra that is capitalism, racism and class rule will not go down without a monumental fight. It's a bleak outlook, but then these are bleak times. For a full review, see [...]

Taylor's book brings clarity to the core issues surrounding the struggle against racism in the US, including: the roots of racist ideology and racial oppression — where it comes from and who benefits from it — pseudo-scientific and cultural racist justifications for racial oppression — the inescapably racist role of the police as armed enforcers of a capitalist state — socialism and the necessity of class analysis in the struggle against racism — the necessity of organized struggle by independent, democratic, grassroots organizations

This is by far the most comprehensive book on the market to date regarding the #BlackLivesMatter movement. Last month I bought a copy of this book for myself and another for an undergraduate student I am currently mentoring, and it is by far our "go to" book when it comes to the #BlackLivesMatter movement and making connections to other important topics that impact the African American community. Taylor's discussion is insightful and the book is accessible to all levels of the academic community (undergraduate to PhD). I expect that non-academics will also find this book highly useful. Another notable strength of this book is Taylor's extensive "notes" at the end of each chapter. My student and I have found other invaluable resources as a result. I want to thank the author for writing such an important book and I look forward to reading more of her work.

An excellent book that gives a tour not only of the current movement for black lives but of the history of black radical movements for change, the ways in which they've been challenged and co-opted, and how they win.

This is an incredibly well-researched, well-thought out book that is also a pleasant read. It is both an excellent historical survey of the modern Black liberation movement as well as a provocative analysis of #BLM and the present day struggles.

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