



Ella Baker: Community Organizer of the Civil Rights Movement (Library of African American Biography)

J. Todd Moyer

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Ella Josephine Baker (1903-1986) was among the most influential strategists of the most important social movement in modern US history, the Civil Rights Movement, yet most Americans have never heard of her. Behind the scenes, she organized on behalf of the major civil rights organizations of her day—the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)—among many other activist groups. As she once told an interviewer, “[Y]ou didn’t see me on television, you didn’t see news stories about me. The kind of role that I tried to play was to pick up pieces or put pieces together out of which I hoped organization might come. My theory is, strong people don’t need strong leaders.”

Rejecting charismatic leadership as a means of social change, Baker invented a form of grassroots community organizing for social justice that had a profound impact on the struggle for civil rights and continues to inspire agents of change on behalf of a wide variety of social issues.

In this book, historian J. Todd Moye masterfully reconstructs Baker’s life and contribution for a new generation of readers. Those who despair that the civil rights story is told too often from the top down and at the dearth of accessible works on women who helped shape the movement will welcome this new addition to the *Library of African American Biography* series, designed to provide concise, readable, and up-to-date lives of leading black figures in American history.

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