



Southern Witness: Unitarians and Universalists in the Civil Rights Era

Gordon D. Gibson

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At last, here is the largely untold history of Unitarian and Universalist involvement in the civil rights movement in the South. Covering congregations in nearly thirty cities and towns and spanning ten Southern states, this extensive study sheds new light on the often heroic efforts of laypeople and clergy in confronting segregation. Author Gordon Gibson witnessed some of this history first hand, as the only UU minister in Mississippi between 1969 and 1984. His interviews with dozens of other activists from the 1950s and 60s has produced many stories, some never before recorded. We learn about Rev. Donald Thompson, shot in the back and run out of town by segregationists in Jackson, Mississippi; Rev. Albert D'Orlando, whose parsonage and church building in New Orleans were firebombed by the KKK; Robert Williams, the Black Power pioneer and radical, and many more. *Southern Witness* explores institutional history as well, revealing patterns in the way these congregations faced the challenges of racial injustice—patterns deeply influenced by the fellowship movement, which planted scores of small, lay-led congregations in that area. Many Southern UUs were radicalized by the movement. These pages tell their tales, as well as the sadder accounts of some who resisted change.

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