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Hooks Institute Selects Hands on the Freedom Plow for Book Award

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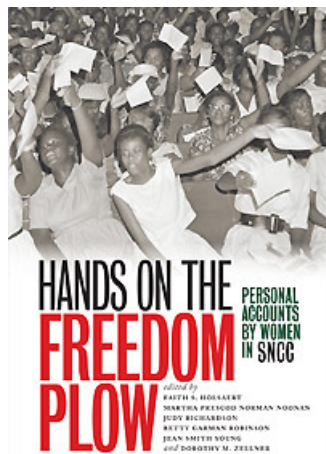
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The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change has selected *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (University of Illinois Press) as the winner of its National Book Award for 2010. The award recognizes a publication that best advances an understanding of the American civil rights movement and its legacy. *Hands on the Freedom Plow* is a compilation of 52 personal narratives from female activists in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).



Edited by SNCC veterans Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, the book gathers the voices of women who provided the civil rights movement's backbone. It provides an instructive and even inspiring example, lending its readers a sense of empowerment.

In the long battle for racial equality, writes Victoria Gray Adams, white segregationists typically thought that "if you controlled the men, you got the rest of them covered." But this community organizer and political leader from Hattiesburg, Miss., realized their mistake: "They didn't know the power of women."



The book illustrates the diverse nature and experiences of SNCC women. They were black, white, Latina, northern, southern, young, old, urban, rural, religious, secular, liberal, radical, idealistic and cynical. "The women of SNCC were tough-minded yet sensitive, grounded in a vision that freedom was not only external in terms of defining a space in the SNCC collective and larger society, but also internal in terms of defining who we were as females," writes Gwen Patton in the concluding essay. For all their myriad experiences, the contributors to this accessibly written, impressively organized volume share an expansive vision of freedom that communicates the ideals of the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change.

The Hooks Institute received more than 30 nominations for the Book Award, primarily from university presses across the United States. In

addition to *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, the other four finalists were Maurice Berger, *For All the World to See: Visual Culture and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Yale University Press); Blair L. M. Kelley, *Right to Ride: Streetcar Boycotts and African American Citizenship in the Era of Plessy v. Ferguson* (University of North Carolina Press); J. Todd Moye, *Freedom Flyers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (Oxford University Press); and Thomas Sugrue, *Not Even Past: Barack Obama and the Burden of Race* (Princeton University Press).

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The five judges included Dr. Femi Ajanaku, associate professor of sociology at LeMoyne-Owen College; Dr. Aram Goudsouzian, associate professor of history at the University of Memphis and chair of the panel; Dr. Charles McKinney, associate professor of history at Rhodes College; Dr. Ladrice Menson-Furr, associate professor of English at the U of M; and Dr. Wanda Rushing, professor of sociology at the U of M.

At a date to be announced later, a contributor to *Hands on the Freedom Plow* will speak at the University of Memphis as part of the Hooks Institute Lecture Series.

The Hooks Institute is now soliciting nominations for next year's National Book Award, which will recognize books published in 2011 that best furthers understanding of the American Civil Rights Movement and its legacy. The recipient of the award will receive \$1,000 and an invitation to deliver an address as part of the Hooks Institute Lecture Series.

For consideration of the 2011 National Book Award, one copy of the book should be submitted, postmarked by Dec. 1, 2011, to National Book Award Nomination, The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change, 107 Scates Hall, University of Memphis, Memphis, TN 38152-3530.

In 1996, University of Memphis officials received approval from the Tennessee Board of Regents to create the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change in the College of Arts & Sciences. The mission of the Institute is teaching, studying, and promoting civil rights and social change. The Hooks Institute archives include Hooks' personal papers, which are housed in the Mississippi Valley Collection in the University's McWhorter Library.