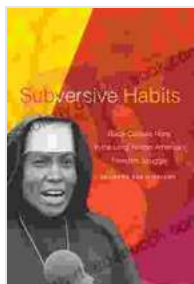


# Black Catholic Nuns: Pillars of Resistance in the Long African American Freedom Struggle



## Subversive Habits: Black Catholic Nuns in the Long African American Freedom Struggle by Riley Edwards

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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In the annals of the African American freedom struggle, the contributions of Black Catholic nuns have often been overlooked. Yet, these courageous women played an indispensable role in every stage of this long and arduous fight for equality and justice.

## The Roots of Resistance

The history of Black Catholic nuns in the United States is intertwined with the horrors of slavery. Beginning in the 18th century, Catholic slave owners in Spanish and French colonies established religious orders for enslaved women of African descent.

While these orders provided some protection from the worst excesses of slavery, they also perpetuated a system of racial inequality. Enslaved nuns

were denied the same opportunities for education and advancement as their white counterparts, and they often faced discrimination and abuse.

Despite these challenges, some Black Catholic nuns found ways to resist their oppression. They organized secret gatherings to pray and sing freedom songs, and they used their limited resources to help other enslaved people escape to freedom.

## **The Civil War and Reconstruction**

The Civil War brought new opportunities for Black Catholic nuns. With the end of slavery, they were able to establish their own independent orders and schools.

One of the most prominent of these orders was the Sisters of the Holy Family, founded in New Orleans in 1842. This order dedicated itself to educating and serving African Americans, both free and freed.

During Reconstruction, Black Catholic nuns played a vital role in helping to rebuild the shattered lives of freed slaves. They provided food, clothing, and shelter to the needy, and they established schools and orphanages to care for the most vulnerable.

## **The Jim Crow Era**

The gains made by African Americans during Reconstruction were short-lived. The rise of Jim Crow laws after the turn of the 20th century led to a new era of racial discrimination and segregation.

Black Catholic nuns continued to fight for justice and equality during this oppressive period. They established schools and hospitals in segregated

communities, and they fought for the right of African Americans to vote, serve on juries, and hold public office.

One of the most influential Black Catholic nuns of this era was Sister Thea Bowman, a pioneering educator and civil rights activist. Sister Thea founded the National Black Sisters' Conference in 1968, which became a leading voice for the rights of African American women in the Catholic Church.

## **The Civil Rights Movement**

Black Catholic nuns played a key role in the Civil Rights Movement, which reached its peak in the 1950s and 1960s. They organized protests, marched alongside civil rights leaders, and provided support to those who were fighting for freedom.

One of the most famous examples of the involvement of Black Catholic nuns in the Civil Rights Movement was the case of the Little Rock Nine, a group of nine African American students who integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

The Little Rock Nine were met with violent resistance from white supremacists, and they were only able to attend school after President Dwight D. Eisenhower sent federal troops to protect them.

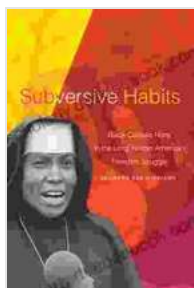
Black Catholic nuns played a vital role in supporting the Little Rock Nine and their families during this tumultuous time. They provided them with food, shelter, and moral support, and they helped to ensure that they were able to continue their education.

## **The Legacy of Black Catholic Nuns**

The legacy of Black Catholic nuns in the African American freedom struggle is a testament to their courage, compassion, and unwavering commitment to justice.

These women have dedicated their lives to serving the most vulnerable members of society, and they have made a profound impact on the lives of countless African Americans.

Today, Black Catholic nuns continue to be a force for good in the world. They are working to address the challenges of poverty, racism, and inequality, and they are inspiring a new generation of activists to continue the fight for justice.



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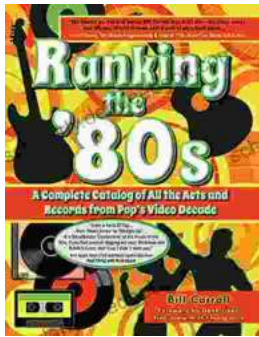
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