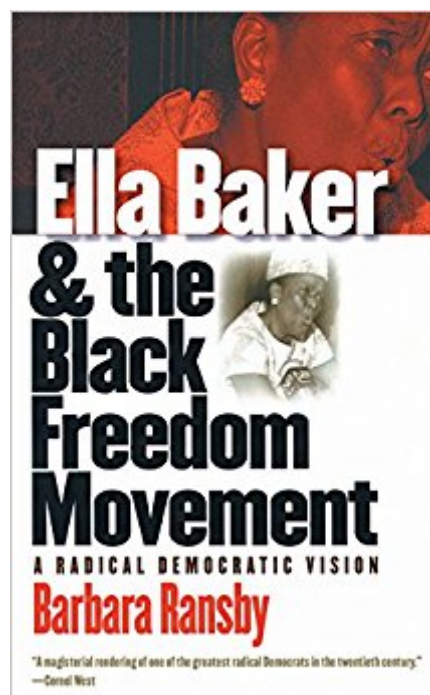




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# Ella Baker And The Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision (Gender And American Culture)



## Synopsis

One of the most important African American leaders of the twentieth century and perhaps the most influential woman in the civil rights movement, Ella Baker (1903-1986) was an activist whose remarkable career spanned fifty years and touched thousands of lives. A gifted grassroots organizer, Baker shunned the spotlight in favor of vital behind-the-scenes work that helped power the black freedom struggle. She was a national officer and key figure in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, one of the founders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and a prime mover in the creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Baker made a place for herself in predominantly male political circles that included W. E. B. Du Bois, Thurgood Marshall, and Martin Luther King Jr., all the while maintaining relationships with a vibrant group of women, students, and activists both black and white. In this deeply researched biography, Barbara Ransby chronicles Baker's long and rich political career as an organizer, an intellectual, and a teacher, from her early experiences in depression-era Harlem to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Ransby shows Baker to be a complex figure whose radical, democratic worldview, commitment to empowering the black poor, and emphasis on group-centered, grassroots leadership set her apart from most of her political contemporaries. Beyond documenting an extraordinary life, the book paints a vivid picture of the African American fight for justice and its intersections with other progressive struggles worldwide across the twentieth century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Ensures that all who wish to know about Baker's tireless work can find a detailed account in one volume. ("Black Issues Book Review") "Ransby's" passionate and demanding book offers a striking, thorough exposition of Baker's expansive, radical, humanist vision. ("Chicago Tribune") "An" excellent biograph[y] based on extensive research into manuscript collections, personal interviews, and secondary sources. . . . "A" significant biograph[y] of "a" significant wom[an]. . . . Show[s] what strong, dedicated women could do for social change during decades when women weren't supposed to do anything but support their husbands and care for their children. . . . Not only teach[es] us about the past but warn[s] us about a possible future. ("Women's Review of Books") "[Ransby's] passionate and demanding book offers a striking, thorough exposition of Baker's expansive, radical, humanist vision. ("Chicago Tribune") "An] excellent biograph[y] based on extensive research into manuscript collections, personal interviews, and secondary sources. . . . [A] significant biograph[y] of [a] significant wom[an]. . . . Show[s] what strong, dedicated women could do for social change during decades when women weren't supposed to do anything but support their husbands and care for their children. . . . Not only teach[es] us about the past but warn[s] us about a possible future. ("Women's Review of Books") "Moving and invaluable. ("The Nation")

A critical and useful analysis of the role of this largely unsung heroine of the movement. . . . This well-researched study of the life of Ella Baker will make a valuable contribution to the voluminous literature on the black freedom struggle in the twentieth century.--Journal of Southern History Moving and invaluable.--The Nation [An] excellent biograph[y] based on extensive research into manuscript collections, personal interviews, and secondary sources. . . . [A] significant biograph[y] of [a] significant wom[an]. . . . Show[s] what strong, dedicated women could do for social change during decades when women weren't supposed to do anything but support their husbands and care for their children. . . . Not only teach[es] us about the past but warn[s] us about a possible future.--Women's Review of Books A significant contribution to our understanding of African American women's activism.--Journal of American History Ensures that all who wish to know about Baker's tireless work can find a detailed account in one volume.--Black Issues Book Review Among the most vivid [civil rights] movement biographies of recent years.--Washington Post Book World In this compelling biography, Barbara Ransby guides us through the life of that extraordinary fighter for

racial equality and social justice, Ella Jo Baker. To all of us who worked with Ella Baker in the movement, she was a person of legendary courage and inspiring intellectual power. She worked harder, saw farther, and reached deeper than anyone else in the struggle, not only for the rights of black people but for fundamental social change. All of her qualities shine through in this book, which is an important contribution not only to women's history and African American history but also to the history of this country.--Howard Zinn, Boston University

A stunning achievement by a brilliant historian. Ransby's exquisite investigation of Ella Baker is grounded in rich archival research and a wealth of oral interviews. In this illuminating analysis, Ransby unveils the private life and dissects the public role played by a leader of the black freedom movement, at once well-known and revered by many but enigmatic even to those closest to her. This superb biography of an extraordinary radical democrat illuminates the intersection of power, struggle, and revolutionary transformation through the lens of a well-spent life.--Darlene Clark Hine, Michigan State University

[Ransby's] passionate and demanding book offers a striking, thorough exposition of Baker's expansive, radical, humanist vision.--Chicago Tribune

Ransby, a historian of indisputable talent and skill, provides numerous intricate, heretofore unknown facts and details of Ella Baker's life while growing up in the South and the path that led her to involvement in civil and human rights efforts. . . . This is a superb book.--Encounter

Writing the biography of a legend is a daunting task, and it is one that Barbara Ransby has accomplished thoroughly and gracefully. . . . This book provides as fine an insight into gender politics in the civil rights movement as any one volume to date. . . . This profile of Baker and her ideas is too important to be missed.--American Historical Review

[A] wise and well-crafted biography of Ella Baker.--Southern Exposure

A magisterial rendering of one of the greatest radical Democrats in the twentieth century. Ella Baker is a grand exemplar of the organic intellectual to emerge from the depths of black culture with a sophisticated international vision and an incredible courage.--Cornel West, Princeton University

An intriguing and nuanced biography. . . . Ransby's treatment of Baker's life is not so much intent upon installing her name on the civil rights marquee as it is concerned with distilling the principles that Baker advocated and conveying her approach to social change. . . . Ransby has done much to carry Baker's legacy from margin to center and to bring her historical image into focus.--The Progressive

This is a truly remarkable biography of a truly remarkable intellectual activist. Ella Baker, a legend in the black freedom movement, has been brought to life through this powerfully written study by historian Barbara Ransby. Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement will become, like Clayborne Carson's *In Struggle*, a standard in our interpretation of the civil rights era. Ransby's balanced and insightful interpretation of this courageous black visionary provides a wonderful model of what biography at its best can

be.--Manning Marable, Columbia University  
Barbara Ransby's long-awaited biography of Ella Baker was certainly worth waiting for! This powerful, unforgettable story of one of the black freedom struggle's most influential and inspirational activists is at once scholarly, analytical, and deeply moving, essential reading for all who are interested in the possibilities of democracy.--John Dittmer, DePauw University  
The strength of Ransby's work is in her detailed accounting of Baker's political life, accompanied by an analysis of Black struggle in the 20th century.--The Crisis  
The definitive biography of one of America's most important civil rights leaders in the twentieth century.--Religious Studies Review  
Ella Baker was an unsung hero and intellectual giant of the black freedom struggle of the twentieth century. Ransby's biography is a magnificent and timely reminder that Baker's visionary voice, eloquent democratic silences, and unflinching faith in the power of ordinary people are much needed guides for the twenty-first century as well.--Lani Guinier, Harvard University  
Ransby offers the grit and gleam of Baker's practical humanist vision of participatory democracy. . . . Ransby's is a remarkable biography worthy of her remarkable subject. Essential for all biography, civil rights, community organizing, feminism, and 20th century U.S. or black history collections.--Library Journal  
This book is worthy of its subject, giving us a rich and vivid portrait of the ultimate critical citizen, inviting us to ask ever more fundamental questions about democracy and about our own capacity for building it.--Southern Cultures

Excellent... My daughter loves it.

One of America's true leaders.

This is a good historical text. From a very radical perspective, text is easy to follow and enjoyable to the reader.

I love it!

Can't recommend this one enough.

Excellent. Thank you!

It was an outstanding book on someone I was not familiar with. It goes into significant detail on her life and times but that is important to give context. I found it quite interesting all the way through.

Very well written.

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