



The Roots of African-American Identity: Memory and History in Antebellum Free Communities

Elizabeth Rauh Bethel

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Spanning the eight decades between the American Revolution and the Civil War, *The Roots of African-American Identity* focuses on the lives of African Americans in the nominally free northern and western states. Examining race and the construction of a politicized racial identity, this book explores how a group of marginalized people crafted a uniquely New World ethnic identity that informed popular African-American historical consciousness. Elizabeth Rauh Bethel examines the way in which that consciousness fueled collective efforts to claim and live a promised but undelivered democratic freedom, helping readers to understand how African Americans reformulated and perceived their collective past. Bethel also reveals how this vision of freedom and historical consciousness shaped African-American participation in the Reconstruction, formed the spiritual and ideological foundation for the modern Pan-African movement, and provided the historical legacy for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.

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