

# New Directions

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## Bookfile

Editorial Staff

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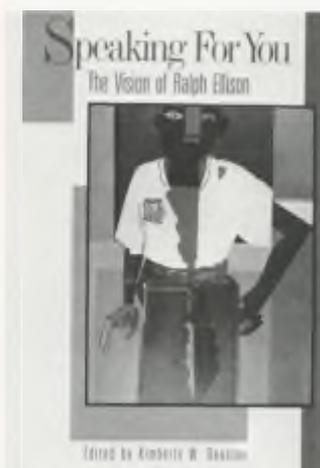
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# BOOKFILE



**Speaking for You: The Vision of Ralph Ellison**, edited by Kimberly W. Benston, published by Howard University Press, Washington, D.C.

This 438-page volume is among the latest in contemporary critical studies on Ralph Ellison, author of the 1952 classic, *Invisible Man*, and other notable works. It contains essays on his works, poems about him, interviews with him and a full bibliography of works by and about him.

"Ellison is both the most traditional of modern American writers (insofar as he demands our constant attention to the details and wisdom of Afro-American culture) and the most revisionist critic of tradition (in that he constantly focuses our attention on the ambiguities inherent in any embrace of the past). In both fiction and criticism, Ellison has exhorted us not to assimilate the past but also to acquire it, to *appropriate* it by interested engagement, in the context of the present," writes Kimberly Benston in the Introduction.

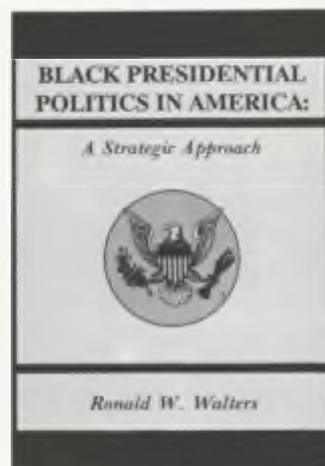
"Speaking for You" is divided into five major sections of scholarly criticism and interviews. A sixth part contains a bibliography, a list of contributors and an index. □

**Black Presidential Politics in America: A Strategic Approach**, by Ronald W. Walters, published by State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y.

This timely book, which is available both in paper and hardcover, is the author's contribution to American politics in a presidential election year. In 255 pages, Walters presents a point of view that calls for an aggressive political posture on the part of Black Americans, particularly in "presidential-level politics."

Among the topics he tackles are, Black politics and the electoral process in general, Blacks and the Democratic Party establishment and effective political strategy on a national level.

"This work represents the culmination of fourteen years of serious study and active involvement in presidential-level politics. Nevertheless, the necessity I have felt to write a political history of that period is only partially resolved in this brief account of such a phenomena as the 1972 Gary convention, the National Black Political Assembly and its subsequent Black Independent Party formation, the Black Democratic Caucus and its various conventions, and the 1984 presidential campaign of Rev. Jesse Jackson. Rather, I have attempted to distill these experiences in an effort to understand the *essential strategy* with which the Black leadership has approached the task of obtaining favorable results for Black participation in presidential politics," writes Walters in the Preface. □



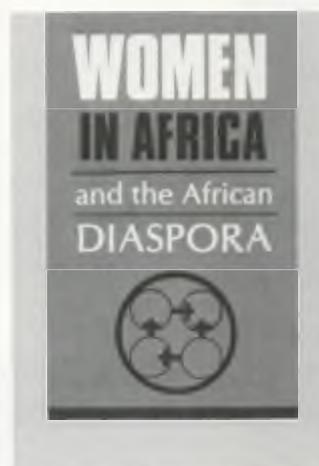
**Repatriates and Refugees in a Colonial Society: The Case of Kenya**, by Joseph E. Harris, published by Howard University Press.

This is a 201-page study of the role played by settlers of two communities established on the eastern coast of Kenya during the nineteenth century in shaping modern day Kenya.

The two communities—Freretown and Rabai—had been founded by Africans liberated from the Indian Ocean slave trade and by other Africans who returned from the diaspora and became repatriates.

These settlers, Harris writes in the Introduction, "had an indelible impact not only on the future leaders of Kenya but on the course of history for East Africa in a more general sense. It is that impact on people, ideas, and institutions that established the repatriates and converts on the coast as pioneers in

Kenya's *uhuru* (independence) and nation building." □



**Women in Africa and the African Diaspora**, co-edited by Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, Sharon Harley and Andrea Benton Rushing, published by Howard University Press.

This volume, 234 page long, contains a collection of scholarly essays on the title subject. These essays were generated from papers at a 1983 conference on "Women in the African Diaspora: An Interdisciplinary Perspective," which was convened on the campus of Howard University under the auspices of the Association of Black Women Historians.

Three thematic sections are presented in this book: "Theoretical Approaches and Research Methods," "Women and New Roles in African Societies," and "Black Women in Folk Culture and Literature."

"Until recently," notes Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, "there has been little effort to organize African diaspora scholarship and cultural activity which focuses primarily upon the experiences of women. Just as black women's studies has grown out of the experiences of black studies and women's studies programs, women as a focus in the diaspora is emerging as a distinct area of inquiry as well." □

**Frederick Douglass and the Fight for Freedom** by Douglas T. Miller, published by Facts on File Publications, New York City.

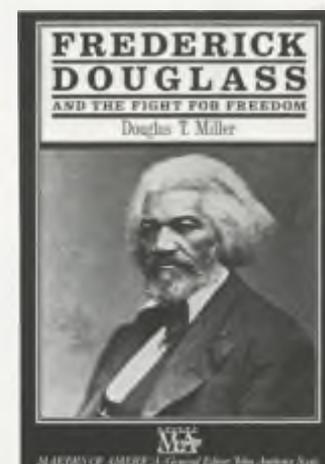
This 152-page volume with illustrations is a short lesson in American history on the life and accomplishments of the great abolitionist, from his early beginnings as a slave in 1818 to his death in 1895 at the age of 77.

Specifically intended for the general reader and young adults, this book is one of six in a series on "The Makers of America." A bibliography of the Rev. Martin Luther

King Jr. will be coming out soon.

"By the time Frederick Douglass joined the abolitionist lecture circuit, mob violence had subsided somewhat, but was still a serious problem. At almost all his speaking engagements headders were present. Often eggs and overripe fruits were thrown. On September 15, 1843, in Pendleton, Indiana, Douglass was severely beaten and was lucky to escape with only bruises and a broken wrist.

"Being an abolitionist under such circumstances took great courage. But being a black abolitionist was twice as dangerous," writes Miller in Chapter 3. □



**John Brown of Harper's Ferry**, by John Anthony Scott and Robert Alan Scott, published by Facts on File Publications, New York City.

Like the preceding book on Frederick Douglass, this 184-page work is part of "The Makers of America" biography series intended for the general reader.

John Brown, whose 1859 assault on arms factories at Harper's Ferry,—conceived as a means to spark a rebellion by slaves—ended unsuccessfully and tragically, had had contacts with Frederick Douglass years earlier.

"The crisis of the Mexican War spurred Brown to move ahead with his plans for freeing the slaves. Knowing that the slaves themselves must accomplish their own liberation, he turned to Frederick Douglass for help and advice," write the co-authors in Chapter 5.

"When Frederick Douglass received John Brown's invitation to visit him in Springfield in the fall of 1848, he responded eagerly. Other black leaders had spoken to him, in words tinged with awe, about this white man who made no secret of his conviction that the slaves must win freedom with arms in hand." □

*This column of current releases will appear from time to time.*