LIVING FOR THE REVOLUTION
by Kimberly Springer

The first history of the life and decline of black feminist organizations.

“Living for the Revolution will force scholars working on either the women's movement or black
liberation to change their standard narrative.”—Robin D. G. Kelley, author of Freedom Dreams: The Black
Radical Imagination

The first in-depth analysis of the black feminist movement, Living for the Revolution fills in a crucial but
overlooked chapter in African American, women's, and social movement history. Through original oral
history interviews with key activists and analysis of previously unexamined organizational records,
Kimberly Springer traces the emergence, life, and decline of several black feminist organizations: the
Third World Women's Alliance, Black Women Organized for Action, the National Black Feminist Organi-
zation, the National Alliance of Black Feminists, and the Combahee River Collective. The first of these
to form was founded in 1968; all five were defunct by 1980. Springer demonstrates that these organi-
zations led the way in articulating an activist vision formed by the intersections of race, gender, class,
and sexuality.

The organizations Springer examines were the first to explicitly use feminist theory as a tool to
further the work of previous black women's organizations. As she describes, they emerged in response
to marginalization in the civil rights and women's movements, stereotyping in popular culture, and
misrepresentation in public policy. Springer compares the organizations’ ideologies, goals, activities,
membership, leadership styles, finances, and communication strategies. Reflecting on the conflicts,
lack of resources, and burnout that led to the demise of these groups, she considers the future of black
feminist organizing, particularly at the national level. Living for the Revolution is an essential reference:
it provides the history of a movement that influenced black feminist theory and civil rights activism for
decades to come.

Kimberly Springer is a Lecturer in American Studies at Kings College, University of London. She is the
editor of Still Lifting, Still Climbing: Contemporary African American Women's Activism.