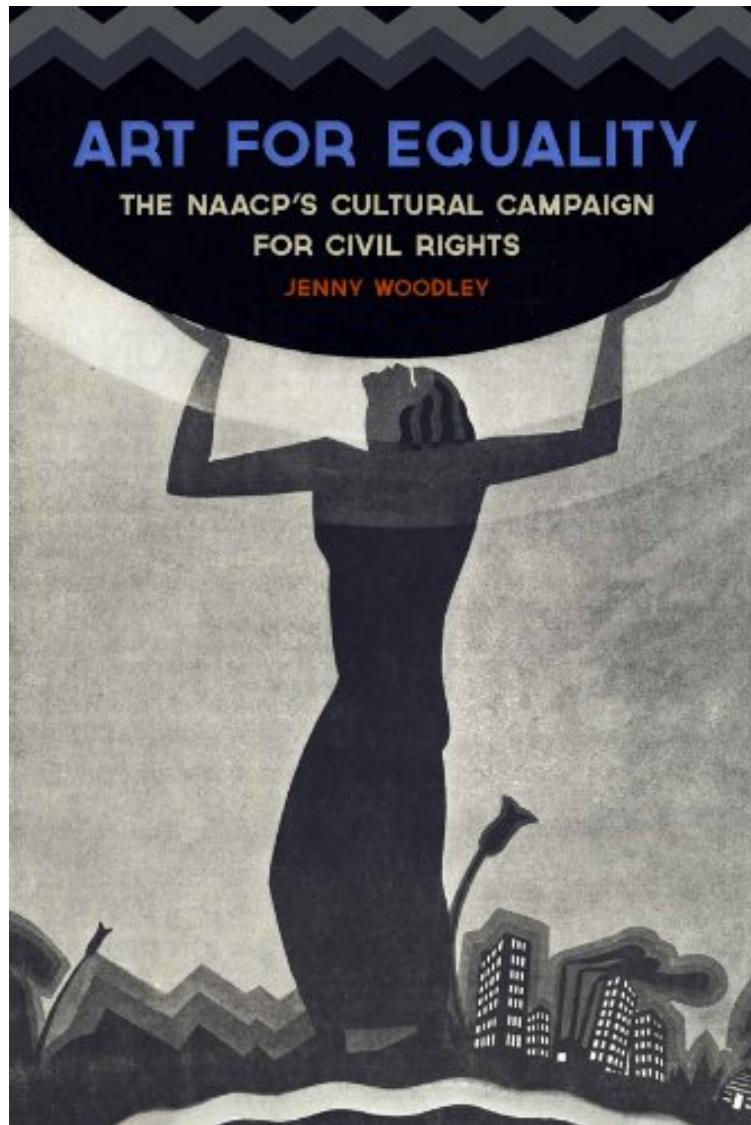


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Art for Equality: The NAACP's Cultural Campaign for Civil Rights (Civil Rights and the Struggle for Black Equality in the Twentieth Century)

Jenny Woodley

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Jenny Woodley : Art for Equality: The NAACP's Cultural Campaign for Civil Rights (Civil Rights and the Struggle for Black Equality in the Twentieth Century) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Art for Equality: The NAACP's Cultural Campaign for Civil Rights (Civil Rights and the Struggle for Black Equality in the Twentieth Century):

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Cultural Promotion Helpful But InsufficientBy Purple DragonChronicles the NAACP's use of the arts--poetry, literature, visual arts, and music to educate the general public on black cultural achievements. It was hoped that this education and exposure would support black bids for full freedom and equality, promote black cultural unity and self-esteem, and counter degrading stereotypes. Though a useful ancillary strategy, cultural promotion is insufficient to change the material conditions of most blacks.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) is the nation's oldest civil rights organization, having dedicated itself to the fight for racial equality since 1909. While the group helped achieve substantial victories in the courtroom, the struggle for civil rights extended beyond gaining political support. It also required changing social attitudes. The NAACP thus worked to alter existing prejudices through the production of art that countered racist depictions of African Americans, focusing its efforts not only on changing the attitudes of the white middle class but also on encouraging racial pride and a sense of identity in the black community. Art for Equality explores an important and little-studied side of the NAACP's activism in the cultural realm. In openly supporting African American artists, writers, and musicians in their creative endeavors, the organization aimed to change the way the public viewed the black community. By overcoming stereotypes and the belief of the majority that African Americans were physically, intellectually, and morally inferior to whites, the NAACP believed it could begin to defeat racism. Illuminating important protests, from the fight against the 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation* to the production of anti-lynching art during the Harlem Renaissance, this insightful volume examines the successes and failures of the NAACP's cultural campaign from 1910 to the 1960s. Exploring the roles of gender and class in shaping the association's patronage of the arts, Art for Equality offers an in-depth analysis of the social and cultural climate during a time of radical change in America.

"Art for Equality is a well-conceived and well-executed study that will add significantly to the historiography of the NAACP, the long civil rights movement, and African American history."¹ John Kirk, George W. Donaghey Professor and Chair of the History Department at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock² In this insightful book, Woodley writes with great verve and confidence. As a result, Art for Equality will attract readers in a variety of fields from African American history to art history to American political history.³ Matthew Pratt Guterl, Brown University⁴ Art for Equality is a terrific addition to the growing literature on the cultural dimensions of the African American freedom struggle which also throws important new light on the policies and practices of the NAACP from its inception to the 1960s. Deeply researched, engagingly written, and persuasively argued the book offers a pioneering examination of how the Association formulated a series of cultural strategies to challenge racist stereotypes, encourage more positive and empowering depictions of African Americans, and expose the brutal realities of racial oppression to white Americans. Woodley's close attention to debates within NAACP, as it navigated the competing claims of "high and low" culture and the imperatives of both "art and propaganda" across a wide range of media and art forms, offers a new perspective on tensions within the Association and a new way to measure its contribution to the struggle.⁵ Brian Ward, Professor in American Studies, Northumbria University⁶ "Art for Equality [is] a necessary contribution to African American social and cultural histories."⁷ Journal of Southern History⁸ This fascinating assessment of the power of the arts (yet another side of W. E. B. Du Bois's declaration that "All Art Is Propaganda") discusses the theories behind a cultural strategy for the organization, as well as several different art forms utilized in this cultural campaign. [...] This is a book worth reading and is particularly useful to historians of the Harlem Renaissance, the civil rights movement, and American cultural studies. [...] The book is beautifully produced [...].⁹ American Historical¹⁰ "Art for Equality appeals to academic and lay audiences alike with its clear, engaging style and sophisticated close readings of literary and visual arts texts. Scholars of cultural studies, film studies, African American history, American history, and those with a critical interest in the relationship between visual culture and politics will find it particularly informative and open to interpretation."¹¹ Louisiana History About the Author Jenny Woodley is a lecturer in modern history at Nottingham Trent University. She was a contributor to *Long is the Way and Hard: One Hundred Years of the NAACP*. She lives in Nottingham, England.