



Fighting Their Own Battles: Mexican Americans, African Americans, and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Texas

Brian D. Behnken

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Between 1940 and 1975, Mexican Americans and African Americans in Texas fought a number of battles in court, at the ballot box, in schools, and on the streets to eliminate segregation and state-imposed racism. Although both groups engaged in civil rights struggles as victims of similar forms of racism and discrimination, they were rarely unified. In *Fighting Their Own Battles*, Brian Behnken explores the cultural dissimilarities, geographical distance, class tensions, and organizational differences that all worked to separate Mexican Americans and blacks.

Behnken further demonstrates that prejudices on both sides undermined the potential for a united civil rights campaign. Coalition building and cooperative civil rights efforts foundered on the rocks of perceived difference, competition, distrust, and, oftentimes, outright racism. Behnken's in-depth study reveals the major issues of contention for the two groups, their different strategies to win rights, and significant thematic developments within the two civil rights struggles. By comparing the histories of these movements in one of the few states in the nation to witness two civil rights movements, Behnken bridges the fields of Mexican American and African American history, revealing the myriad causes that ultimately led these groups to "fight their own battles."

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