



# From Outrage to Action: THE POLITICS OF GRASS-ROOTS DISSENT

*Laura R. Woliver*

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## **From Outrage to Action: THE POLITICS OF GRASS-ROOTS DISSENT** Laura R. Woliver

From Outrage to Action examines the rise and fall of grass-roots interest groups through in-depth analyses of four incidents that mobilized citizens around local injustices. In one case, a local judge declared a five-year-old sexual assault victim a particularly promiscuous young lady. In another, an innocent black man died in police custody. In the third, a man with a criminal record was charged with murdering a ten-year-old girl, and in the last a judge commented during a juvenile sentencing that rape is a normal reaction to the way women dress. Through in-depth interviews with activists, Laura Woliver examines these community actions, studying the groups involved and linking her conclusions to larger questions of political power and the impact of social movements. Group successes and failures are explained through analysis of fluid social movements and the role of religion, class, gender, and race. Woliver found that activists unprepared for the ostracism and conflict resulting from their dissent retreated from public life, while those who identified with alternative communities avoided self-blame and maintained their political commitments. She relates the community responses in these cases to those in the case of confessed mass murderer Jeffrey Dahmer and in the beating by Los Angeles police officers of Rodney King. Her findings will make fascinating reading for those interested in the rise and fall of grass-roots interest groups, the nature of dissent, and the reasons why people volunteer countless hours, sometimes in the face of community opposition and isolation, to dedicate themselves to a cause. The four ad hoc interest groups studied are the Committee to Recall Judge Archie Simonson (Madison), the Coalition for Justice for Ernest Lacy (Milwaukee), Concerned Citizens for Children (Grant County, Wisconsin), and Citizens Taking Action (Madison).

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