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This Woman's Work: The Writing and Activism of Bebe Moore Campbell (Margaret Walker Alexander Series in African American Studies)

Osizwe Raena Jamila Harwell

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This Woman's Work presents a social history and critical biography based on the life of award-winning writer Bebe Moore Campbell (1950–2006). It offers the personal story of a popular novelist, journalist, and mental health advocate. This book examines Campbell's life and activism in two periods: first, as a student at the University of Pittsburgh during the 1960s black student movement and, second, as a mental health advocate near the end of her life in 2006. It describes Campbell's activism within the Black Action Society from 1967 to 1971 and her negotiation of the Black Nationalist ideologies espoused during the 1960s. The book also explores Campbell's later involvement in the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), her role as a national spokesperson, and the local activism that sparked the birth of the NAMI Urban–Los Angeles chapter, which served black and Latino communities (1999–2006).

Adjacent to her activist work, Campbell's first novel, *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine*, connects to her emerging political consciousness (related to race and gender) and the concern for racial violence during the US black liberation period from 1950 to 1970. Similarly Campbell's final novel, *72 Hour Hold*, is examined closely for its connection to her activism as well as the sociopolitical commentary, emphasis on mental health disparities, coping with mental illness, and advocacy in black communities. As a writer and activist, Campbell immersed her readers in immediately relevant historical and sociopolitical matters. *This Woman's Work* is the first full-length biography of Bebe Moore Campbell and details the seamless marriage of her fiction writing and community activism.

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