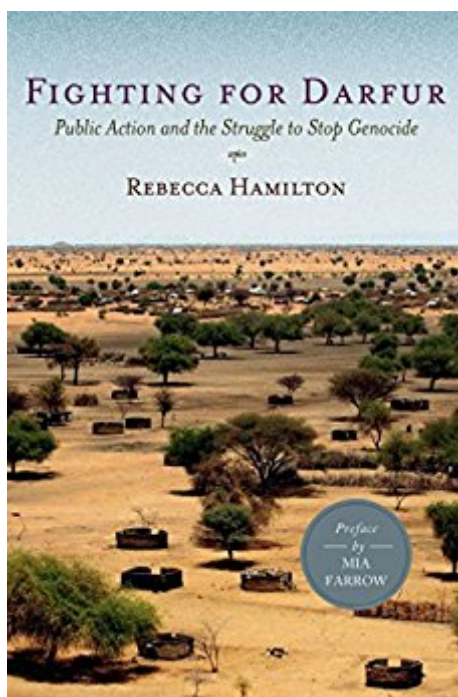


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Fighting For Darfur: Public Action And The Struggle To Stop Genocide



Synopsis

Around the world, millions of people have added their voices to protest marches and demonstrations because they believe that, together, they can make a difference. When we failed to stop the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, we promised to never let such a thing happen again. But nine years later, as news began to trickle out of killings in western Sudan, an area known as Darfur, the international community again faced the problem of how the United Nations and the United States government could respond to mass atrocity. Rebecca Hamilton passionately narrates the six-year grassroots campaign to draw global attention to the plight of Darfur's people. From college students who galvanized entire university campuses in the belief that their outcry could save millions of Darfuris still at risk, to celebrities such as Mia Farrow, who spurred politicians to act, to Steven Spielberg, who boycotted the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing, Hamilton details how advocacy for Darfur was an exuberant, multibillion-dollar effort. She then does what no one has done to date: she takes us into the corridors of power and the camps of Darfur, and reveals the impact of ordinary people's fierce determination to uphold the mantra of "never again." Fighting for Darfur weaves a gripping story that both dramatizes our moral dilemma and shows the promise and perils of citizen engagement in a new era of global compassion.

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Customer Reviews

This is a book about the popular movement in support of Darfur, and as such is pertinent to all those who marched in a rallies, wrote letters to their representatives, formed clubs or in other ways advocated around issues of Darfur, human rights, prevention of genocide or promotion of peace. The book is a very accessible read, rather than an dense academic study such as the works of Alex De Waal. It takes a hard look at the rapid if at times chaotic creation of a mass advocacy movement to address what the US government had determined to be genocide, a movement which despite achieving impressive ability to persuade Congress was unsuccessful at helping to end the conflict which inspired it. The history of the development of the movement and of events in Sudan is well told. One of Hamilton's strengths was clearly her access to political decision makers in the US, the UN and in Sudan. The book is very good at bringing out the individuals in historical events, such as the description of how Colin Powell made the genocide call, or President Bush's agreement to refer Sudan to the International Criminal Court. There are a lot of tough subjects in the book for advocacy campaigners to mull over. One such challenge is how to sustain a mass movement which is not able to absorb detailed information about evolving events. Another subject is the costs and benefits of the international court's indictment of President Bashir, an issue referred to as justice vs. peace. Coming from a humanitarian background myself I have long thought that humanitarian costs should be added to this list. The book points out that as a shiny new organization, one of the biggest flaws of the Save Darfur movement was its lack understanding of Sudanese politics.

"Fighting for Darfur" chronicles the story of the Darfur advocacy movement from its inception to its rise as the one of the most powerful social movements of the previous decade. Hamilton uses her extraordinary access to everyone from former Secretary of State Colin Powell to Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir's chief advisers to supply insider accounts from the U.S. government, the U.N., the International Criminal Court, the Sudanese government, and advocacy organizations like Save Darfur and the Genocide Intervention Network. "Fighting for Darfur" is much more than a blow-by-blow account of the movement, however. Throughout the book, Hamilton incisively analyzes the options available to both activists and those in power. It is often sobering. Activists who lacked even a basic knowledge of Sudan's history and politics consistently prioritized peacekeepers over creating conditions for a political settlement that would ensure peacekeepers could actually protect civilians. In the end, they got neither. Although Samantha Power's "A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide" posited that a domestic constituency for international human rights issues could ensure their peaceful resolution, Hamilton persuasively argues that although

such a constituency is necessary for bringing such conflicts to the fore, they are insufficient in world where BRIC countries and others provide alternatives to American economic and political support. As someone who participated in the movement, this book is a painful but necessary corrective to the often blithely self-celebratory narratives that activists of all kinds tell themselves, which all but preclude the possibility of effective action in the future.

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