



THE DEPARTMENT OF GENDER & SEXUALITY STUDIES PRESENTS

"She stood there by him with a gun"

Mabel Williams and the Philosophy of Armed Resistance



A Talk by Dr. Jasmin Young
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at the University of California, Los Angeles

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Dr. Young outlines the philosophy of armed resistance as articulated by Mabel Williams, a southern activist from North Carolina. She offers a divergent perspective of Black women regarding this tactic and strategy during the early years of the Civil Rights Movement. As an advocate of armed self-defense, Mabel

Williams did not regard moral suasion as an effective tactic to combat segregation or secure racial justice. Instead, she saw segregationists as humans reduced to "raging beasts," transformed by their "hatred and prejudice." And while history placed her in the shadow of her well-known husband, Robert F. Williams, she stood beside him with a gun of her own. Black women's advocacy and practice of armed resistance have remained unexplored by scholars of the Civil Rights Movement and marginalized in histories of women's activism. The literature traditionally treats women as naturally pacifist, excluding women's militant activity from studies of armed self-defense in the Civil Rights era. Dr.

Young's work significantly interrogates how the tactic of nonviolence and armed resistance are gendered by examining the lived experiences of Black women like Mabel that have previously been ignored by scholars.