



# **African or American?: Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784-1861**

*Leslie M. Alexander*

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In this illuminating history, Leslie M. Alexander chronicles the development of Black activism in New York from the formation of the first Black organization, the African Society, in 1784 to the eve of the Civil War in 1861. In this critical period, Black activists sought to formulate an effective response to their unequal freedom. Examining Black newspapers, speeches, and organizational records, this study documents the creation of mutual relief, religious, and political associations, which Black men and women infused with African cultural traditions and values. In the end, the Black leadership resolved to assert an American identity and to expand their mission for full equality and citizenship, signaling a new phase in the quest for racial advancement and fostering the creation of a nascent Black Nationalism.

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