

# Grace Towns Hamilton and the Politics of Southern Change

Lorraine Nelson Spritzer, Jean B. Bergmark



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**Grace Towns Hamilton and the Politics of Southern Change** Lorraine Nelson Spritzer, Jean B. Bergmark No history of the civil rights era in the South would be complete without an account of the remarkable life and career of Grace Towns Hamilton, the first African American woman in the Deep South to be elected to a state legislature. A national official of the Young Women's Christian Association early in her career, Hamilton later headed the Atlanta Urban League, where she worked within the confines of segregation to equalize African American access to education, health care, and voting rights. In the Georgia legislature from 1965 until 1984, she exercised considerable power as a leader in the black struggle for local, state, and national offices, promoting interracial cooperation as the key to racial justice. Her probity and moderation paved the way for the election of other black women, and by the end of her political career no southern legislature was without women members of her race.

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