



Claiming Exodus

Rhondra Robinson Thomas

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During the 18th century, American Puritans introduced migrant and enslaved Africans to the Exodus story. In contrast to the ways white Americans appropriated the texts to defend the practice of slavery, African migrants and slaves would recast the Exodus in defense of freedom and equality, creating narratives that would ultimately propel abolition and result in a wellspring of powerful writing.

Drawing on a broad collection of Afro-Atlantic authors, Rhondda Robinson Thomas shows how writers such as Absalom Jones, Daniel Coker, and W.E.B. Du Bois employed the Exodus metanarrative to ask profound, difficult questions of the African experience. These writers employed it as a literary muse, warranting, Thomas contends, that they be classified and studied as a unique literary genre. Through an arresting reading of works renowned to the largely unknown, *Claiming Exodus* uncovers in these writings a robust foundation for enacting political change and a stimulating picture of Africans constructing their own identity in a new and unfamiliar land.

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