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978-1-316-51475-7 — Southern Black Women and Their Struggle for Freedom
during the Civil War and Reconstruction
Karen Cook Bell
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Southern Black Women and Their Struggle for Freedom during the Civil War and Reconstruction

This rich and innovative collection explores the ways in which Black women, from diverse regions of the American South, employed various forms of resistance and survival strategies to navigate one of the most tumultuous periods in American history – the Civil War and Reconstruction era. The essays included shed new light on individual narratives and case studies of women in war and freedom, revealing that Black women recognized they had to make their own freedom, and illustrating how that influenced their postwar political, social, and economic lives. Black women and children are examined as self-liberators, as contributors to the family economy during the war, and as widows who relied on kinship and community solidarity. Expanding and deepening our understanding of the various ways Black women seized wartime opportunities and made powerful claims on citizenship, this volume highlights the complexity of their wartime and postwar experiences, and provides important insight into the contested spaces they occupied.

Karen Cook Bell is Professor of History and the Wilson H. Elkins Endowed Professor at Bowie State University, Maryland. Her book *Running from Bondage: Enslaved Women and Their Remarkable Fight for Freedom in Revolutionary America* won the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society International Book Award in 2022.

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Edited by
KAREN COOK BELL
Bowie State University



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Dedicated to my mother Mable Thomas Cook

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Contributors

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During the early phase of this project, Randall Miller and Stanley Harrold read several chapters and provided incisive comments offering advice on how to shape the papers. They understood the vision for this book and offered guidance on ways to make it stronger. We also thank the anonymous peer reviewers who read the chapters and offered constructive feedback. We hope this book will be generative in leading to more studies on how southern Black women navigated the turmoil of the Civil War and Reconstruction. Freedom, as several studies have demonstrated, did not come quickly or with ease. Emancipation was an uneven, nonlinear process that impacted every region of the South differently. What is clear in the pages that follow is the determination of Black women to create a life in freedom while confronting power structures that hindered their progress and advancement. They paid the price on the battlefields of war and freedom.