H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

David M.P. Freund, Marya Annette McQuirter. *Biographical Supplement and Index.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 158 pp. $21.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-510258-1.

James R. Grossman. *A Chance to Make Good: African Americans, 1900-1929.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 157 pp. $21.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-508770-3.

Vincent Harding. *We Changed the World: African-Americans, 1945-1970.* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. 190 pp. $21.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-19-508796-3.

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Published on H-High-S (October, 1997)

Strides Toward Freedom: African Americans in the Twentieth Century

The Young Oxford History of African Americans series, under the general editorship of Robin D.G. Kelly and Earl Lewis is an important new resource for high school history teachers and students because each of the authors is an accomplished scholar (earlier volumes include works by Colin Palmer, Deborah Gray White, and Peter Wood) who provides an accessible way for teachers and students to become familiar with the latest research in African American history. The three volumes constituting the basis of this review complete the eleven volume series and, in doing so, offer readers a new resource for the study of the African American experience within the scope of the history of the United States.

Together with volumes eight and ten, James R. Grossman's *A Chance to Make Good: African Americans, 1900-1929* and Vincent Harding's *We Changed the World: African Americans, 1945-1970* (volumes seven and nine respectively) complete the series' treatment of the twentieth century.[1] These latest additions take a basically chronological approach, feature numerous black and white illustrations, and include timelines and suggestions for further reading. The absence of citations makes it difficult to assess the authors' sources, but each clearly draws heavily on his own previously published work, supplemented by other examples of the best scholarship from the last twenty-five years.[2] The works therefore resemble short textbooks but their focus on African-American history present Grossman and Harding with the opportunity to craft superb examples of narrative history. Both avoid historiographical debate and concentrate instead on chronicling the moving story of how African Americans fought for racial justice and revolutionized American life in the twentieth century.

In *A Chance to Make Good: African Americans, 1900-1929*, James R. Grossman examines African American history from the turn of the century to the onset of the Great Depression during what he notes has been referred to as the "nadir" of post-Civil War black history (p. 16). Early on, Grossman introduces the reader to the concepts of "place" and "space" that recur throughout his work. In his opening chapter entitled "Making a Living," for example, Grossman skillfully and clearly explains the sharecropping and crop-lien systems that dominated the post-Civil War South. No longer able to rely on the institution of slavery to keep black Southerners in their "place," whites devised alternative labor systems designed to perpetuate African American dependence on white landowners and merchants. Moreover, whites defined "place" in a cultural sense as expressed in their determination to sharply limit educational opportunities for African Americans and in their demands that blacks act with deference towards whites in all aspects of Southern life. When whites interpreted black behavior as a threat to this order, they responded as they had for decades, with intimidation and violence. The most dramatic expression of this white terror was the wave of lynchings that peaked in the late nineteenth century. Concern that lynching was a messy extra-legal means of control that might eventually invite federal intervention led white Southerners to institute new legal barriers beginning in the 1890s that ranged from disfranchisement (so effective that by 1940 only .4 percent of black men in Mississippi were registered to vote) to Jim Crow laws codifying segregation.

In myriad ways, blacks resisted these strategies of containment by creating their own "space" within black institutions including the family, churches and schools. Grossman provides a wealth of information on the role of each in his chapters "Building Communities" and "Schooling for Leadership." These "communities of struggle," as Grossman describes them, fostered a sense of solidarity and fought for black integration into mainstream American life (p. 64). Rejecting the notion that these goals were incompatible, Grossman argues convincingly that although leaders and institutions expressed "competing visions and emphases, activism took place simultaneously at many levels" (p. 64). In his discussion of the development of black organizations and associations in the early twentieth century, Grossman misses a chance to compare and contrast those efforts with similar trends associated with the white middle-class Progressive movement.

Grossman acknowledges that competing notions about how to improve their quality of life caused "mixed feelings among black Americans" (p. 79). In his chapter "Schooling for Leadership," for example, Grossman notes that "education was one area in which African Americans confronted the tension between the high price of segregation on the one hand and the advantages of community control on the other" (p. 81). Perhaps the best-known of these disputes pitted Booker T. Washington's "accomodationist" philosophy that emphasized black self-improvement largely within the confines imposed by whites against W.E.B. Du Bois' more militant call for black access to the nation's best colleges and the full rights of citizenship. Here Grossman offers a useful corrective to the standard U.S. history textbook treatment of Washington and Du Bois which often paints the two as direct competitors. While noting the differences between the two men, Grossman argues that, "For much

of the African-American leadership at the beginning of the century, politics involved more than a choice between racial integration or self-help" and that "lines were never clean" because alliances shifted over time (p. 91).

African-American determination to create space could also take on a literal meaning when blacks moved from one location to another in search of superior farmland, more favorable sharecropping contracts, or better job opportunities. As one Mississippian put it, "Whenever we get an opportunity and inducement and (are) in position to take of ourself, we moves" (p. 33). Grossman develops this theme of physical movement most thoroughly in his chapter on the Great Migration of the 1910s and 1920s entitled "The 'Second Emancipation.' " An estimated 1.5 million African Americans seized what one termed a "chance to make good," by seeking work in northern factories straining to meet World War I demand. As during the first emancipation of the 1860s, however, hope soon turned to frustration when the newcomers encountered obstacles ranging from inferior housing to job discrimination and exclusion from white dominated unions. Grossman finds that while life improved for some of the migrants, many soon encountered a "different kind of immobility" in the North where access to the full rights of citizenship were denied to them, even if in less strictly defined terms than in the South (p. 147).

Grossman concludes with a chapter entitled "New Negroes" in which he explains the emergence of an "increasingly assertive sensibility" across black America (p. 134). According to Grossman, this new spirit had deep roots ranging from Booker T. Washington's "gospel of self-reliance" to the "hopes and aspirations" of the Great Migration. Black veterans returning from World War I added their own powerful contribution by demanding that a war fought to "make the world safe for Democracy" must translate into civil rights reform at home (pp. 133-34). This new spirit was expressed in ways ranging from the cultural phenomenon known as the Harlem Renaissance to support for Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association. Grossman finds that by the end of the 1920s, most African Americans remained disappointed with the pace of change but held out hope for the next generation.

Vincent Harding's *We Changed the World: African Americans, 1945-1970* resumes the narrative in 1945 when that next generation emerged from World War II determined to realize unfilled dreams. Taking advantage of beneficial circumstances including Truman and Eisenhower administration concerns about the nation's international image, the new-found political clout of black voters in northern cities, and the expanded resources of the NAACP, black activists seized this "new moment" (p. 6).[3] Most readers will already be familiar with the general contours of Harding's story, but he is a master at bringing the events to life. Harding's own experience in the civil rights revolution (in 1961 he moved from his native Chicago into the South to work full-time in the movement) is never directly mentioned, but no doubt helps to explain the emotional power of his work.

Although Harding does not use the same terminology as Grossman, he deals with similar concepts. Determined to break out of the place defined for them by whites, post-World War II black activists relied on the same institutions of family, church, and school (including the all-black colleges attended by the likes of Ella Baker and Martin Luther King, Jr.) as the organizational framework for revolution. As in the first decades of the twentieth century, whites (most dramatically in the South where an age-old fear of "nigger rule" fueled brutal repression) responded with a furious effort to maintain the old order. This time, however, the sheer determination of African Americans broke open the floodgates and forced the nation to take significant steps towards racial justice by the mid-1960s.

When reading Harding's moving chapter on the mid-1950s, entitled "Jim Crow Must Go!: The Road from Brown to Montgomery," one is reminded of the superb audio-visual treatment of the same years in the PBS series "Eyes on the Prize" for which Harding served as senior academic advisor. While there is little new interpretation from Harding, he does a particularly good job of explaining the role of specific individuals and the complicated alliances formed between the ever-increasing number of organizations devoted to racial justice. Harding therefore discusses not only relatively well-known figures such as E.D. Nixon, head of the Alabama branch of the NAACP, and Martin Luther King, Jr., but also JoAnn Robinson who headed Montgomery's Women's Political Council (WPC). It was Robinson and fellow WPC members who developed the telephone tree that sprang into action following Rosa Parks' arrest and energized the black community with leaflets urging a boycott of the city's bus system before male leaders had fully decided on a course of action.

With the stakes higher than ever before, it was perhaps inevitable that competing models for social change would once again emerge within the African American community. Harding presents the reader with a clear dis-

cussion of how, when, and why King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) sometimes found itself challenged by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) after 1960-61 and then, more seriously, by the Black Power movement beginning in the mid-1960s. Readers may want to supplement Harding's discussion of these challenges to King and SCLC with other interpretations that provide more detail about the role of actors such as Ella Baker whose alternative vision for how to achieve social change is not fully explored by Harding.[4]

Harding is careful to make it clear that progress was neither linear nor predictable. White resistance was intense and progress came only as the result of the sheer determination of the thousands who put their lives on the line in marches, boycotts, and protests. He notes that during the Albany Movement of 1961-1962, for example, divisions widened within SNCC leadership over whether to ask for assistance from King and SCLC. Even after the call went out to SCLC, the Albany movement faltered when white leaders intentionally limited publicity by checking the response by police. Even in failure, however, Harding notes that "the movement gained a new vision" of how to take on city-wide segregation (p. 107). Those lessons would be applied in Birmingham where King vowed to "break the back of segregation all over the nation" (p. 122). Harding therefore paints a picture of a twisting path toward change that will help to combat the temptation to see civil rights reform as inevitable.

In the end, Harding reaffirms that credit for the eventual success of the civil rights revolution belongs to African American activists and organizations that forced white Americans to abandon many of the legal barriers to racial equality. He acknowledges the importance of Supreme Court rulings such as the 1946 Morgan v. Virginia decision that found segregation on interstate buses unconstitutional. But court rulings meant little as long as whites refused to comply and in the absence of federal will to enforce the law. Chiding Eisenhower for "offering a version of his own resistance" (p. 66) and noting that it was not until the 1963 Birmingham campaign that the Kennedy administration became serious about introducing civil rights legislation, Harding rejects any notion that white political leaders helped lead the way. Time and again, Harding reminds us, blacks endured hatred and physical pain without responding in kind while reminding each other that, "we've come too far to turn back" (p. 67). His suggestion at the end of the book that the black freedom struggle in the United States later spread from Beijing to Berlin in the 1970s and 1980s is stated rather than proved, but it is undeniably true that the benefits of the civil rights revolution extended far beyond the black community to create a more democratic and free society for all Americans.

The final volume of the series, a *Biographical Supplement and Index* co-authored by David M.P. Freund and Marya Annette McQuirter, contains brief biographical sketches of leading persons discussed introduced in the series, a list of "Museums and Historic Sites Related to the History of African Americans," and an index to all volumes of the series. The biographical sketches feature suggestions for further reading about each figure and the list of museums and historic sites offers students a list of places and people to contact for further information. More exhaustive biographical listings are available elsewhere, but the volume is clearly a useful addition to the set.

The Oxford series deserves a place in every high school library as it represents an engaging and thorough resource for teachers and students who want to deepen their understanding of African American history. Used in conjunction with the PBS television series *Eyes on the Prize* and its companion volume of primary documents, volumes seven through ten of the *Young Oxford* series will be a indispensable source for research papers and projects on the modern civil rights movement.[5] Editors Kelley and Lewis are to be congratulated for putting together a first-rate series.

Notes

[1]. The earlier volumes are Joe William Trotter, Jr., *From a Raw Deal to a New Deal?: African Americans, 1929-1945* and Robin D.G. Kelley, *Into the Fire: African Americans since 1970.*

[2]. These include James R. Grossman's, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989); and Vincent Harding's, *Martin Luther King: The Inconvenient Hero* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996); and *There is a River: The Black Struggle for Freedom in America* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981).

[3]. For a more in-depth discussion of these circumstances see Harvard Sitkoff, "The Preconditions for Racial Change," in *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America*, 3rd ed., eds. William H. Chafe and Harvard Sitkoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 157-66.

[4]. One good example is Charles Payne's, "Ella Baker and Models of Social Change," *Signs* 14 (Summer 1989): 885-899.

[5]. Clayborne Carson et. al., eds., *The Eyes on the Prize: Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and First-hand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990* (New York: Penguin Books, 1991).

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Citation: Ben Labaree. Review of Freund, David M.P.; McQuirter, Marya Annette, *Biographical Supplement and Index* and Grossman, James R., *A Chance to Make Good: African Americans, 1900-1929* and Harding, Vincent, *We Changed the World: African-Americans, 1945-1970*. H-High-S, H-Net Reviews. October, 1997.

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