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John T. Cumbler. *From Abolition to Rights for All: The Making of a Reform Community in the Nineteenth Century.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. xi + 238 pp. $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8122-4026-9.

Leslie A. Schwalm. *Emancipation's Diaspora: Race and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest.* John Hope Franklin Series in African American History and Culture. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009. xii + 387 pp. $65.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-3291-2.

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Negotiating Emancipation's Landscape

The Emancipation Proclamation changed the course of history in the United States. While historians understand the magnitude of the change, they are not always clear on its details. Specifically, in the case of Leslie A. Schwalmâs and John T. Cumblerâs studies, how did Emancipation reverberate far outside the South, and how did it shape the embryonic Progressive reform movement? Answers to these questions are surprising, and ultimately understanding these micro-histories helps the historian delineate more exactly how emancipation changed America.

Schwalmâs *Emancipationâs Diaspora* is different from most Reconstruction studies, and different, in this case, is useful. The author has done historians of race, slavery, and Reconstruction a great service by locating her study in a veritable no-manâs land. Instead of the traditional Reconstruction locale of the South, Schwalm considers how the midwestern states of Iowa, Wisconsin, and Min-

nesota grappled with emancipation. She does so while admitting that there were just a few thousand black people living in the region–about nine thousand in 1870 (p. 45). Schwalm argues that the numbers do not tell the entire story. âThe force and extent of emancipationâs impact on Americans and their ideas about race,â Schwalm contends, âwas not dictated by the relative size or proportion of African Americans in the populationâ (p. 2). While a reasonable counterargument can be made that there was a correlation between the size of a black population in a given location and the relative impact of emancipation there, Schwalm successfully demonstrates that small numbers did not preclude significant tumult.

Schwalmâs subtitle is âRace and Reconstruction in the Upper Midwest,â but she astutely begins her study before the abolition of slavery. She turns new historical ground by telling the stories of blacks in the region, and explaining specifically how and why migration occurred. Some black men and women came to the Midwest fleeing Southern slavery, while others willingly entered the region as slaves (although rarely acknowledged as such) hoping that promises of eventual manumission would be kept. Pulling from rich sources, Schwalm proves that midwesterners understood the animalistic brutality of slavery. They had heard first-hand accounts of how slaves were âworked liked horses and fed like pigs at a trough; their children were sold away like a calf from a cowâ (p. 10). In this brief section, Schwalm provides both compelling anecdotes as well as the numbers, maps, and graphs necessary to understand slavery in this often overlooked region.

Schwalm argues that âracism was not imposed on Midwestern whites by outsiders; it was integral to the regionâs history and developmentâ (p. 29). She demonstrates this reality by analyzing how Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin each passed antebellum laws meant to limit black settlement. These were states, she argues, proud to be free of both slavery and blacks. The case studies, which are scattered throughout the book, drive home this dichotomy. Certainly the detail of Schwalmâs work is impressive. Few readers, for example, would be able to guess that Keokuk, Iowa, with 245 black residents, possessed the stateâs largest black community. This information alone, of course, does not answer many questions, but Schwalmâs exploration of Keokuk (and similar communities) proves to be compelling and insightful. Keokuk was a river city shaped by both slaveowners and free blacks. In the early nineteenth century it transformed into a city where fugitive slaves could seek refuge. An African Methodist Episcopal church and âAfrican schoolâ popped up. The Dred Scott decision of 1857 led to racial conflict. Then the communities of the Midwest experienced a surge in black migrants during the Civil War itself. Using newspapers, church records, letters, and government documents, Schwalm chronicles how blacks migrated to the Midwest and how racism in the region evolved.

Schwalm is at her best in the second half of *Emancipationâs Diaspora*, describing how an average midwestern African American created âa life in freedom.â She uses one chapter to analyze the communities and public culture created by blacks after emancipation and another to address the struggle for civil rights. The author uses a variety of reliable records to create a database delineating the experiences of 2,200 black Iowans between 1865 and 1880. From this impressive resource we gain many useful details, such as the fact that one-fifth of all blacks working in white households were younger than sixteen and that 60 percent of black men worked as laborers. Black men were largely shut out of higher paying manufacturing jobs and half of all black women worked as either domestic servants or laundresses (p. 139).

Even with their limited economic means, African Americans invested heavily in clubs, schools, and churches. Here Schwalm follows the lead of Theda Skocpol and Jennifer Osler by emphasizing the significance of the Masons to African Americans. The Masons, as many histories have pointed out, meandered clumsily toward racial segregation. Exclusion of blacks from white Mason groups came through a series of incremental rejections. When this segregation was complete, black Masons were left to form their own chapters–a situation that, while fueled by racism, actually served many black communities quite well. The Prince Hall Masons of the Midwest, for example, created useful bonds between African American men and provided a mouthpiece to rebuke racist traditions.

Throughout her work, Schwalm is careful to distinguish between the experiences of black men and black women in the Upper Midwest. Many black men fought for emancipation by literally fighting in the Union army. After the war, black men sought equality by fighting for the right to vote and then participating in electoral politics. These are conventional historical findings. Black women, aware of the gender landscape, pursued other avenues of influence. It is in dealing with black women that Schwalm provides her most unique, and perhaps most valuable, contribution to our understanding of the Reconstruction era. Mirroring Steven Hahnâs emphasis

on a broad definition of political activity (but in the North and with women specifically), Schwalm details how black women used âpublic venues and courtroomsâ to challenge segregation (p. 176). Whether by lavishing gifts on politicians, shaping Sunday sermons, joining womenâs societies, pushing for access to education, participating in legal challenges to segregated railroad companies, or joining with white women (at the end of the nineteenth century) to pursue suffrage, black women caused change. Schwalm posits that these contributions have been largely unrecognized; she undoubtedly rectifies this oversight.

While Schwalm studies an unlikely locale to provide historians with new insight about the Reconstruction era, Cumbler, in *From Abolition to Rights for All*, focuses on two abolitionists to discuss the evolution of a network of activists in America. Cumbler selects Henry Ingersoll Bowditch and Julia Ward Howe to anchor his narrative, with the hopes of telling âa personal yet more inclusive history of a community of reformersâ (p. 3).

Howe and Bowditch are indeed compelling subjects. Howe served as president of the New England Suffrage Association and composed the famous âBattle Hymn of the Republic.â She emerged from New York Cityâs upper crust, and was allowed, unlike many young women of the early nineteenth century, to pursue a variety of academic interests. She mastered foreign languages and devoured philosophical texts. Howe also hobnobbed with her fellow elites of the Northeast. She befriended the likes of Charles Sumner and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow before the men became famous. In marriage, however, Howe suffered. Her husband, Samuel Howe, expected a wife to be committed to matters of family and home, certainly not to be engaged in public life. That Julia Ward Howe had to defy her own husband regularly to help lead abolitionists and suffragettes, among other groups, only adds to her usefulness as a historical case study.

Bowditch grew up in Boston and studied medicine at Harvard. A trip to France for a medical residency of sorts liberalized Bowditchâs political views. Bowditch wanted âto see everything more free than it is nowâ (p. 25). Shortly after setting up practice in Boston, he joined the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society. Bowditchâs position as one of Bostonâs most respected physicians gave him a perch from which to help administer the needs of those less fortunate than himself as well as to push for equal treatment of African Americans. After abolition, he joined the unwieldy community of reformers that historians usually lump together as progressives.

Cumbler effectively uses Howe and Bowditch to tell the story of the nineteenth-century reform community that developed in New England. He returns time and time again to these two representative figures to bring personality and tangibility to his discuss of reform ideals. This organizational tactic should be a great service to the reader, especially for an undergraduate or those unfamiliar with Cumblerâs broader topic.

Cumbler charts the expansion of a network of reformers who focused first on abolishing slavery and then, with slavery vanquished, on a spate of other issues. It is in discussing the reform nexus–how it worked, what issues forged consensus among reformers, what pulled them apart, etc.–that Cumbler especially shines. By limiting his scope to the Northeast, Cumbler gives historians a more nuanced picture of reformers. Many of these reformers based their reform actions not on religion, but rather on John Lockeâs principle of natural rights. âWith other good souls,â Howe and Bowditch applied the conviction that humans have a series of incontrovertible rights to the world around them (p. 155). Progressives in the later decades of the nineteenth century would similarly use âthe natural rights positionâ to advance their reform agenda (p. 155).

The reformers fostered community by emphasizing such broad themes as social justice, natural rights, and antiracism before debating the particulars of their agenda. There were periodic fractures in the community and certainly outside opposition. On slavery, the question of how vehement (or violent) the protest should be created tension among abolitionists. Additionally the reformers often faced opposition from their families and members of the societyâs upper classes who opposed unseemly protests. Cumbler points to the enforcement of the fugitive slave law in New England as providing the final impetus to turn reformers into radicals. After watching officials of the federal government apprehend fleeing slaves in New England, and return them to their masters, the reformers had seen enough. New England, Bowditch declared, now needed âphysical resistance to slavery as we saw it in the Northâ (p. 83).

Interestingly, Cumbler does not focus much on the activities of reformers during the Civil War itself. He offers a few anecdotes about Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation, but the author largely portrays the Civil War as a bridge between the abolition movement and the broader reform efforts of the late nineteenth century. It is a unique way to think about eman-

cipation. âWhat emancipation would mean for the freed slaves,â Cumbler points out, âhaunted the abolitionist community as the war drew to a closeâ (p. 91). The New England abolitionists were suspicious of Lincoln; they wondered first if he would abolish slavery and next if he would promote racial equality. Their concerns on the latter point were well founded.

The womenâs suffrage movement received an influx of talented and passionate advocates for progressive change after the Civil War was over. Howe helped found the New England Womenâs Club, which advocated that a woman be treated as âa free agent, fully sharing with man in every human right and every human responsibilityâ (p. 107). Womenâs clubs quickly caught on throughout the country. Cumbler astutely points out that the suffrage movement did not merely draw talent and enthusiasm from the abolitionist cause, it also copied many abolitionist tactics. Suffrage supporters urged politicians to transcend partisan politics and support their female, tax-paying constituents. The suffragettes were often disappointed at the cowardice of politicians, so they went to party conventions and supported reform candidates.

By the end of his work, Cumbler connects abolitionists to progressive reformers. There was a similar concern for human rights reform and civil rights for all. With this broad understanding, one can connect the reforms aimed at slaughterhouses, tenements, and poverty to those of the abolitionists half a century earlier. Bowditch, for his part, spent his last years focusing on public health initiatives and aiding female doctors in gaining professional recognition. In the end, neither Howe nor Bowditch characterized themselves as abolitionists. Instead, with the changing times and new reforms, âphilanthropistâ seemed like the only term broad enough to capture their convictions (p. 136).

Cumblerâs work, of course, is not without its shortcomings. The book is short in length and specific in geographical focus. Because of these perfectly reasonable choices in scope, Cumbler draws few comparisons between his New Englanders and the reform communities in, say, the South or West. Obviously the antebellum abolitionist movement would have been radically different in such places, but offering some national context might have been helpful. Also, in dealing with the antebellum, Civil War, Reconstruction, and Progressive eras (all in 165 pages), Cumbler has had to pick and choose. His choices may frustrate some readers. Fortunately Cumbler picks his spots wisely and has crafted a coherent and useful narrative. In the end, the reader gains an expanded understanding of the network of social reformers that persisted across a period of about seventy years and spanned many separate âcauses.â In this day and age of fostering connections through the technology of social networking and smartphones, observing how a large number of passionate individuals stayed connected, active, and effective is indeed fascinating stuff.

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