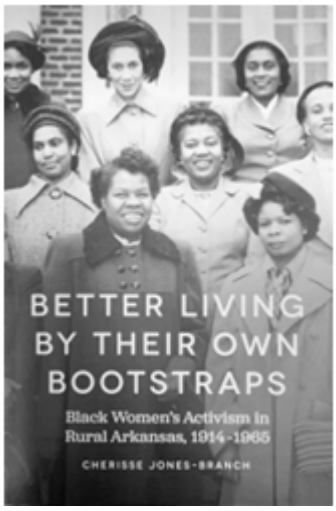
Reviews

Better Living by Their Own Bootstraps: Black Women's Activism in Rural Arkansas, 1914-1965. Cherisse Jones-Branch. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: The University of Arkansas Press, 2021. Pp. vii + 227, acknowledgments, introduction, conclusion, notes, bibliography, index. $39.95, paperback)

Historically, African American women in the United States have had two barriers to over- come, the social constructs of race and gender. When scholars in the past have examined the ex- periences of Black women, they have described either the enslaved or those who left the South, both important areas of scholarship. But what about the Black women who remained in the South? Cherisse Jones-Branch's most recent monograph, Better Living by Their Own Bootstraps: Black Women's Activism in Rural Arkansas, 1913– 1965, provides agency for Arkansas's rural Black women. Jones-Branch is the Dean of the Gradu- ate School and a professor of history at Arkansas State University where she researches the experi- ences of rural African American women. In addition to several peer-reviewed articles, in 2018 she also co-edited Arkansas Women: Their Lives and Times. Using a plethora of primary sources, includ- ing oral history, personal papers, the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Records, and newspapers, Jones-Branch's well-grounded re- search thoroughly documents how rural Black women in Arkansas made positive differences in their lives, as well as the lives of their family, friends, and community. As Jones-Branch states in her introduction, she wanted to explore "the many ways they individ- ually, collectively, and diligently augmented African Americans' quality of life in rural Arkansas" (p. 4). Jones- Branch adds to the his- toriography of rural Black women, which is an area of history that needs more attention from scholars. Whether they were club women, agricultural laborers, Home Demonstration Agents, or Jeanes Teachers, Jones-Branch persuasively argues that they sought to improve their respective commu- nities despite the challenges they faced. The ana- lytical framework of Jones-Branch's study adds to the historiography of African American, rural, and women's history.



Jones-Branch's book is divided chronologi- cally into twelve chapters, with each one explor- ing a different aspect and/or era of rural Arkansas Black women's activism. Chapter one explores the role of Arkansas Jeanes Supervising Industrial Teachers. These women used their role in the community to educate residents in "basic education skills" and public health, as well as in political activism (p. 10). Jones-Branch's research on African American Home Demonstration Agents is exceptional. In chapters two, three, four, and five, Jones-Branch details how they were able to carefully advance their agenda of up- lifting their community without "offending" southern whites. During World War One, Ar- kansas's African American Home Demonstra- tion agents assisted local women in conserving food (food security), while at the same time ai- ding their own families. Home Demonstration Agents became imperative to the Black commu-

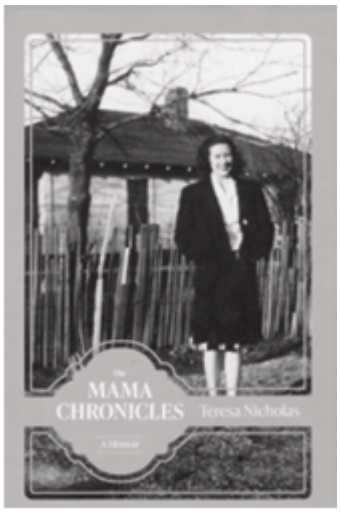
nity during the Mississippi River Flood of 1927 by providing nutritious meals which helped ad- dress the health disparities that plagued rural Blacks. The information the Home Demonstra- tion Agents provided to the community during the Great Flood proved to be invaluable once the Great Depression began in 1929. Arkansas's Af- rican American Home Demonstration Agents also had Home Demonstration Clubs which "created all female spaces for rural women to ask questions and to discuss health, family, and child- care concerns" (p. 65). In addition to describing the contributions of Arkansas's African Ameri- can Home Demonstration Agents, Jones-Branch documents the contributions of the Arkansas As- sociation of Colored Women. The author's tone is earnest, without the self-importance that can plague histories. By examining the work of the Arkansas As- sociation of Colored Women in chapter six, Jones-Branch adds to scholarship on the Na- tional Association of Colored Women, since most scholarship on the organization focuses on their urban efforts, while their rural work is less documented. As club women they wanted to up- lift their community, and the Arkansas Associa- tion of Colored Women focused their efforts on establishing a facility that assisted "young Black women who had been sent to adult prisons for criminal activity" (p. 75). Their goal came to fruit- ion shortly after the end of the Second World War, in 1949, when the Arkansas state legislature allocated funding for the Fargo Negro Girls Training School. The author took much the same approach in her first book, Crossing the Line: Women's Interracial Activism in South Carolina Dur- ing and After World War Two. Chapter seven addresses the contributions of rural African American women to Arkansas during the Second World War. As in World War One, rural Black women helped the United States Department of Agriculture meet its food production goals, thanks especially to the efforts of the Jeanes Supervising Industrial Teachers, Home Demonstration Agents, and club women. Although it was a challenging environment, the rural African American women tried their best, for all hoped their effort would lead their ability to exercise their Constitutional rights. Ad- ditionally, they focused their efforts on youth rec- reational activities as well as improving home life, since many parents were working in various ca- pacities to assist the United States during the war. In chapter eight, Jones-Branch delves into the little-researched Arkansas Farm Bureau Fed- eration Negro Division and the Spirit of Cotton Pageant. Jones-Branch asserts that both organiza- tions led to the economic education of rural black women, especially on egg marketing laws and on attempts to commodify their bodies through the Cotton Pageant. Jones Branch's final three chapters examine post-World War Two activism among these coun- try women. As the modern civil rights movement emerged, Arkansas's rural African American pop- ulation took notice. News of the Smith v. Allwright case led Home Demonstration Agents and club women to meet on the importance of voting. While better health and nutrition remained a constant theme, other areas of interest among these rural Black women included the modern conveniences of telephones and electricity, which helped benefit their families financially. Chapter nine profiles Ethel B. Dawson and her work with the National Council of Churches of Christ Home Missions Division. Dawson used "Chris- tian principles and US law" as motivation to as- sist African Americans fighting for their civil rights. Issues important to Dawson included mother and infant high mortality rates, lack of respect for Black womanhood, and unemploy- ment. The National Negro Home Demonstra- tion Agents' Association, the Black counterpart to the all-white National Home Demonstration Agents' Association, was established in 1957. In this organization, farmers of Arkansas held prom- inent roles. The Civil Rights Act of 1964

led to the desegregation of the United States Depart- ment of Agriculture, thus ending the National ## Negro Home Demonstration Agents' Associa-

tion. However, rural Black women in Arkansas still fought for equality. The modern civil rights movement led to the appointment of Annie Za- chary Pike to the Arkansas Welfare Board. De- spite the challenges she faced, she prevailed and became a prominent Republican. In 1972 Pike ran for the state senate. Although not victorious at the polls she demonstrated what all a rural Black woman from Arkansas can do, according to Jones-Branch. Cherisse Jones-Branch's study of rural Afri- can American women in Arkansas is essential for studying African American, rural, and women's history and should be used as a framework for exploring the lives of rural African American women in other southern states.
--Dawn Herd-Clark

The Mama Chronicles: A Memoir. By Teresa Nicholas. (Jackson, Missis- sippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2021 Pp. 243, acknowledgments. $25.00, hardcover)

The stories of mothers and daughters echo through history because these relationships often define who we are, even if we resist those defini- tions because of a fraught relationship with our mothers. In this memoir, Teresa Nicholas shares her devoted, contentious, painful, and beloved relationship with her mother, Florence Hood Nicholas. Most of the memoir takes place as Florence enters the final years of her life, al- though there are significant flashbacks to family history. The author's relationship with her mother mirrors, in many ways, the complexity of the author's relationship with her hometown of Yazoo City, located in the Mississippi Delta, and her relationship with Mississippi as a quintessen- tially Deep South state. Nicholas' mother experi- ences multiple heath crises, including strokes, pernicious infections, recurrent pneumonia, and broken bones throughout the book. Indeed, a cursory reading of the text could give the reader the impression that "Mama's" final years were filled with only pain and that the author felt only disdain and shame at her home state and its his- tory of racism. But life, like this memoir, remains more complex than simple surface impressions.



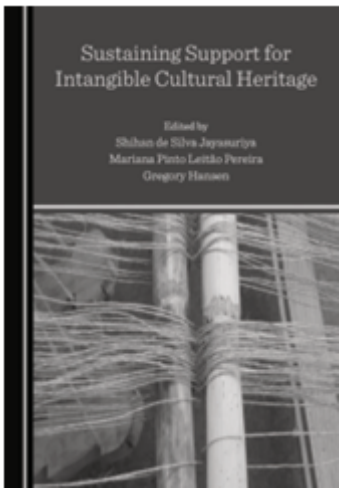
Although Nicholas lays bare her grief and confusion over the declining health of her mother, Florence herself often meets these ex- periences with equanimity. One of her catch- phrases is “Ain’t nothing I can do about it” (p. 121). She often uses this phrase in response to medical diagnoses that would terrify most people. Nicholas credits her mother’s composure to her early life in the Mississippi Delta when her own mother, the author’s grandmother, survived early widowhood in the 1930s by sharecropping cotton—a brutal existence. It was so miserable that Florence answers Teresa’s queries about Hood family history with the tersely repeated phrase, “Don’t nobody want to hear nothing about that mess” (p. 151). Yet Teresa has mem- ories from childhood of the Hood family “re- main[ing] for hours, hooting and hollering over their former hardships” (p. 22). The disconnect between her mother’s withholding responses to her questions in her eighties and Teresa’s own childhood memories of her mother’s laughter about those very same misfortunes drives Teresa’s search for her own identity. While Florence may offer the reader a char- acter of stoicism in the face of adversity—indeed, in the face of death itself—Teresa’s portrayal of herself provides an unstinting look into a woman who yearns for a place to belong. This memoir

offers little respite to the reader, as the Hoods and the Nicholas families had many tragic events framing their family histories, and these past in- cidents pepper the already-poignant narrative wherein Nicholas describes her leaving the Deep South, first for college in Pennsylvania, and then moving to New York City and upstate New York for much of her adult life. Nicholas may have left the South, but she describes her husband Gerry as a “Yankee” early in the text (p. 9), a signal to readers that her loyalties might be more complex than even Nicholas realizes. Nicholas admits that she felt shame at her mother’s poverty-class past and her own lower- middle-class upbringing in a semi-converted du- plex in Yazoo City. Nicholas’ father figure is an absent presence in this book, often referred to as having left a legacy of useless bits of hardware he claimed he collected to fix-up the duplex; Nich- olas reminds us at regular intervals that the du- plex was never truly renovated by her father, which deepened her embarrassment of it as the family home. Despite the title of this memoir, I wondered at the absence of her father in the narrative, only to discover, thirty-five percent into the book, that ten years before The Mama Chron- icles, Nicholas wrote a memoir about her father. That memoir is titled Buryin’ Daddy: Putting My Lebanese, Catholic, Southern Baptist Childhood to Rest (University Press of Mississippi). Clearly, from the existence of The Mama Chronicles, her project to put her childhood to rest remained un- finished. Perhaps wounds such as making peace with our relatives who have died can never be wholly healed, and the fact that Florence has her last, massive stroke, just as she has finally agreed to answer questions about her past by allowing Teresa to interview her, deals an emotional blow to the reader. Yet when Teresa and Gerry move their belongings from their New York storage unit, she discovers an archive of letters written to her from Florence during Teresa’s college years. These letters are warm and reveal many details about Florence’s quotidian experiences; they rep- resent, at long last, a measure of peace for Teresa about the love her mother obviously felt for her—despite the many hardboiled layers of Florence’s personality. A discovered cache of letters can be tied up neatly with a ribbon and held to our hearts. Memoirs, like life, are messier. Despite some rest- fulness at the end of the book, Nicholas still has not found lasting peace in her relationship to herself and with her sense of where she belongs. And while the richness of the language Nicholas uses to replicate her mother’s Delta dialect, evokes strong memories in this reader (I am from Kentucky, but I have spent much of my adult life in Alabama and Georgia), there are also trou-bling elements to this memoir. The most overtly problematic aspect is Teresa’s and Gerry’s deci-sion to move to Mexico, a country they had frequently visited on vacations. Their naivete about the process, which replicates many ele- ments of settler colonialism and Ugly American- ism, permeates many of her descriptions of their lives in Mexico. She gives rich detail about the complexity their semi-ex-patriot existence adds to her life shuttling between San Miguel and Yazoo City—and to the limits it puts on spending time with her mother in her last years, which adds very real tension to the narrative. This memoir may not be the best choice for someone who has recently experienced end-of- life caregiving of a loved one. Despite negative elements, this story brings alive the shared past of those of us who love the South, but who also feel shame at its past, whether we mean our col- lective past or our familial histories. These stories are worth preserving, even if they bring us pain, so that we can learn from that painful past and move into a more hopeful future. Nicholas, in sharing Florence with the world, reminds us of the flawed but beautiful humanity within so many of our mothers.

--Kristen Ruccio

Sustaining Support for Intangible Cultural Heritage. Edited by Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya, Mariana Pinto Leitão Pereira, and Gregory Hansen. (Newcastle upon Tyne, England: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. Pp. vii +168, list of illustrations, acknowledgments, biographies of contributing authors, introduction, commentary, index. $36.22, paper)

This edited volume of eight articles presents case studies for thinking about the critical relationship between intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and sustainable development (SD). Though the contributors bring a variety of per- spectives and method- ologies, it should be noted from the start that most are working from the specific defini- tional context of ICH and SD as defined by the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intan- gible Cultural Heritage and the 70th session of the UN General Assembly's adoption of "Sus- tainable Development Goals" (2015). This definitional context is important, and this is perhaps my central critique: A lack of basic description surrounding the origins of the convention and the ways this policy is generally mobilized (or not—the US is not a signatory on the 2003 Con- vention) serves as an initial barrier to readers looking for an entry-level discussion on ICH. A broad, approachable look at defining ICH comes only at the end of the volume in Gregory Hansen's commentary titled, "Resources for Re- siliency within Intangible Cultural Heritage." While the volume is directed for readers well- versed in UNESCO policy and practice, I do not discourage readers looking for more founda- tional concepts, especially as it relates to heritage in the United States. I would suggest, though, that these readers begin at the end with Hansen's succinct overview.



Mariana Pinto Leitão Pereira opens the vol- ume with her introduction, “Situating Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development: A Challenging Partnership?” wherein she contex- tualizes the thematic areas and essays as a contin- uation of a conversation started at the 2020 conference, “Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development,” hosted by the Uni- versity of London. The parameters of this con- tinuing conversation are made clear by the three major thematic sections of the work: “Intangible Cultural Heritage and the COVID Pandemic,” “Intangible Cultural Heritage in/as Perform- ance,” and “Decolonising Intangible Cultural Heritage and Sustainable Development.” In introducing and weaving the three major areas together, Pereira’s introduction is a dense but provoking call to frame heritage as inextricable from sustainability. The first thematic portion focuses specifi- cally on the COVID pandemic and is arguably the more tenuous of the three thematic areas. Lena Dominelli’s “Protecting our Environment: Learning Lessons from Covid-19,” centers on the role of social workers—and particularly what she terms green social workers—in fighting global pandemics by engaging with communities and individuals on the ground. Specific reference to ICH is limited; the article focuses pointedly on the relationship between environmental degrada- tion and global pandemics. In contrast, Bilinda D. Nandadeva’s chapter, “Living Culture and Sustainable Development: Impact of the Pan- demic on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Sri Lanka” (the second and final of this section) fo- cuses specifically on ICH. The article features a sweeping look at several instances of Sri Lankan

ICH impacted by, and in many cases altered to address, the realities of life during lockdown as a means of providing examples of and suggestions for how ICH might be encouraged to adapt to changing global realities. The second thematic portion of this volume is the most robust of the three, focusing on ICH “in/as Performance.” In “Safeguarding Afro-Sri ## Lankan Intangible Cultural Heritage,” Shihan de Silva Jayasuriya looks at the manja perform- ance of an Afro-Sri Lankan community, her anal- yses emphasizing ICH’s influence on identity and one’s sense of belonging, particularly within the Sirambiyadiya community with African and Portuguese dual heritage. Beheroze Shroff’s “In- tangible Cultural Heritage of Sidis of Gujarat, India” focuses on individual and community ini- tiatives to sustain Sidi heritage, particularly sacred and spiritual practices such as the goma/dhammal dance and jikkar songs. Shroff in- troduces key complicating factors for analysis: the economic and social marginalization of Sidis, as well as the diverging inter-generational aspira- tions within the community for preserving and recording traditions. Chapane Mutiua’s article that follows, “Local Knowledge as Intangible Cul- tural Heritage: The Case of Omba and Majini in Northern Mozambique,” also focuses on spiritual practice, in this case the Islamic rituals of omba and majini. Mutiua argues that top-down dis- course from the modern State and more main- stream religious movements in Mozambique deemphasizes local knowledge and “undermines the efforts for the preservation of intangible cul- tural heritage such as omba and majini . . . And by doing so, local ideas and practice about the protection of nature (for instance, forests and mangroves) and of maintenance of social order are challenged” (pp. 85-86). Gregory Hansen rounds off this section with his piece, “KASU FM 91.9’s ‘Bluegrass Monday’: Performing Intan- gible Cultural Heritage and Fostering Historic Preservation in Arkansas, USA.” This piece is a photo essay highlighting KASU’s “Bluegrass Monday,” held weekly at the Collin’s Theatre in Paragould. Hansen points to the United States’ historical focus on bricks-and-mortar approach to historic preservation and concludes that intan- gible practice (music performance in this case) can be economically sustained in a way that also sustains the built environment within which these events are held. Of note, Hansen gives an overview of the concept of cultural conservation —an intellectual and policy-minded movement in the United States that predates ICH in thinking about ways that ICH might be sustained along- side the preservation of the built environment. The final thematic portion, a focus on decol- onizing ICH and SD, begins with Ritu Sethi’s chapter, “The Many Shades of Safeguarding In- tangible Cultural Heritage and its Sustainable Development in India” which presents micro case studies of ICH and SD in India. Sethi’s chapter aims to illuminate the vulnerabilities of ICH practitioners, especially as revealed by the COVID-19 pandemic, and concludes with policy recommendations to “ensure a sustainable future for ICH in these paradigm-altering times and beyond” (p. 118). Cheryl Toman concludes the final section with “Nadia Origo’s Aurore’s Journey: A Novel About Sustainable Development by a Gabonese Geographer.” This piece is an interest- ing essay that feels initially out of place, but Toman makes the case for the importance of bringing the study of literature—particularly liter- ature that takes its source from oral tradition— into a broader heritage discourse. Toman notes, “Oral tales often tell about the power of nature and the sacrifices humans must make to preserve and protect it and thus provide a certain ‘user’s manual’ of sorts” (p. 146). As previously mentioned, Gregory Hansen closes the volume with a commentary, “Re- sources for Resiliency within Intangible Cultural Heritage.” Here, Hansen provides a broad-based history of ICH policy while pointing to major thematic

undercurrents throughout the book. I would summarize the final takeaways of this sec- tion and the entire volume as this: Tangible ma- terial culture relies on (and is often given

meaning by) the intangibles of belief, knowledge, and skill; likewise, the intangible is often made manifest and/or engaged through the tangible, such as craft, musical instrumentation, or dress. No greater example of this interdependence can be found than the dependence that human ac- tivity has on the environment within which our cultural heritage is practiced. To sustain our ICH, we need to give equal and urgent attention to the sustainability of the physical and natural environment within which we live and create. This volume demonstrates that this includes an attention to indigenous and traditional ways of knowing and caring for place, as well as a macro focus on supporting the health, wellbeing, and livelihoods of bearers of ICH.
--Virginia Siegel

Marginalized: Southern Women Playwrights Confront Race, Region, and Gender. By Casey Kayser. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2021. Pp. 205, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. $30.00, paper)

Casey Kayser's Marginalized: Southern Women Playwrights Confront Race, Region, and Gender, examines Southern women's marginalization and the geographical, ideological, interpretive, and genre-based obstacles they have endured as they perform their craft (p. 5). The author probes the silences surrounding women, African Americans, and the LGBTQ community and their strategies to carve out spaces for themselves as playwrights from historically excluded backgrounds. Kayser addresses women writers "in a significant genre, through its assertion and recovery," and aspires to have them understood as a group. She further queries the positionality of identity, specifically that informed by gender, race, sexuality, and region, enlivens our understanding of the complex representations of the American South in theatre.



Southern writers like William Faulkner, Flannery O’Connor, Eu- dora Welty, and Richard Wright had been her- alded heretofore. However, this has not been the case for southern women playwrights. Kayser considers plays and playwrights that are more in- clusive in their coverage of the post southern South and the global and diverse South. Some of the playwrights she chronicles, like Pearl Cleage for instance, did not grow up in the South, but her play Chain “evokes the South in nonsouthern settings” (p. 8). Kayser’s focus on the modern and contem- porary periods is essential because women playwrights, in most cases, did not see their plays “staged or critically recognized until the mid- twentieth century, especially in the South” (p. 9). Organized into five chapters. Marginalized focuses on southern women playwrights’ utilization of “place, displace, and re-place” and how they de- fined myriad conceptualizations of the South. Chapter one “Southern Drama and Geo- pathology,” explores southern women playwrights’ marginalized status through the in- equities in American theatre that were promul- gated by overwhelmingly white, male critics. Kayser problematizes the sway they held over how plays were received by their audiences. The sec- ond chapter, titled “Lillian Hellman’s South” ex- amines three playwrights’ works that satirize’ perceptions of the region through a feminist per- spective. In the third through the fifth chapters playwrights “place,” “displace” and “e-place” the South in ways that deconstruct myths, bridge

gaps between the northern and southern United States, and productively complicate generalized perceptions of the region by emphasizing its di- versity and multiculturalism. For Kayser, Sandra Deer and Elizabeth Dewberry's work is situated in a "familiar southern milieu" with the intent to challenge and dismantle myths. However, that effort is lost in translation because audiences overlook the satire in favor of the exacerbation of long-held southern stereotypes and images. By shifting to the work of Paula Vogel and Pearl Cleage, Kayser analyzes how women playwrights used their craft to interrogate the dis- placed South. Leveraging such plays as Cleage's Chain and Vogel's The Oldest Professional, Kayser hones in on the nostalgia for the South that in- forms the experiences of those who migrated to northern cities like New York. Their works en- courage the audience to explore similarities as well as dissimilarities in the making and shaping of perceptions of the North and the South and the ways they reveal themselves in migrants' lives in both spaces. The final chapter highlights playwrights whose works "re-place traditional conceptions" of the South. By attending to Shay Youngblood and Sharon Bridgeforth's plays, Kayser presents the creativity of two African-descended, lesbian playwrights who portray the South as a space where LGQTIA lives have long been a part of the cultural fabric. Bridgforth's loveconjure/blues and Youngblood's Shakin' the Mess Outta Misery offer more fluidity in their analyses of how marginal- ized groups perceived the South. They, in Kayser's analysis, provided a vision of a more in- clusive South. Marginalized is a well-executed and much needed message to readers about southern women playwrights' struggles and their successes in American drama and theatre due to their mul- tiple and interconnected identities. Their success resides in the fact that some of them very keenly and creatively deployed strategies to critically ex- amine and satirize traditional southern ideology for their audiences. That, as Kayser explains, is the act of placing the South. Other playwrights displace the South in an effort to encourage their northern and southern audiences to draw con- nections between the two regions. Still yet are the playwrights who replace the South by honing in on those who had long existed in the region but did not neatly fit into normative and easily di- gestible categories. Yet, they were still deeply en- meshed in the fabric of Southern life. Kayser has provided an important road map that well directs readers to contemplate southern women playwrights and positionality and inter- sectionality in American drama. We would do well to follow her lead.

--Cherisse Jones-Branch

Joan of Arkansas. By Emma Wip- permann. (Brooklyn, New York: Ugly Duckling Press, 2023. Pp. 160. $20.00, paperback)

"The orange sky was no longer sky but a dark and fiery plume as tall as it was wide. The forest floor was fire, each tree a lit match toward heaven" (p. 156).



If ever a book had a perfectly timed release, it was Joan of Arkansas, which came out in a year when smoke from wildfires choked cities in the northern United States, while a multi-month heatwave saw regular tri- ple-digit highs in the South. Combine that with the ongoing moral panics about how cer- tain people present their gender in dress and appearance, along- side a political system that remains paralyzed before a civilization-end-

ing threat, and Emma Wippermann's Joan of Ar- kansas feels downright prophetic. The book is something of a mixed-media mé- lange of poetry, drama, and prose that relates the story of Joan, an "awkward teen" who "rly needs to feel / God's Hot Gaze" (p. 17) living in Dom- remy, Arkansas, not far from Petit Jean State Park, a park named after another cross-dressing French girl, who, according to legend, followed her beloved to the New World disguised as a boy before dying of some unspecified illness. Joan is a social media darling, with millions of followers, given to visions about Charles VII, the governor of Arkansas who just announced his candidacy for the presidency. Namely, God, through Joan, demands that "Governor Charles VII / will ac- cept the past, / present, and ongoing / crisis of the planet and / act accordingly in regards / to the Warmth, escalating / devastation, genocidal / domestic and foreign / policies, and the Heat- / driven migration of those / whom this country has / systemically displaced" (p. 55). Charles VII at first balks, but Joan ends up passing muster with the local priest and then works the miracle of producing internet access out in the sticks, and he embraces her (and all her followers). But once elected, he reneges on every promise, adhering instead to the Republi- can agenda of closed borders, burning fossil fuels, and vision of family values that excludes the cross-dressing Joan and the God to whom she refers by plural pronouns. We leave Joan as she is being readied for a mental hospital and turn the page into a section containing excerpts from W. P. Barrett's 1932 English translation of the transcripts from Joan of Arc's trial, rendered as poetry. The last section, "The Dove," consists of a prose narrative provided by a young woman named Adrienne (recalling Adrienne Dumont, the purported real name of Petit Jean) who is a student at the local Catholic high school. She re- counts Joan's return after a year's absence, as well as their growing friendship and physical relation- ship, both of which soon end with Joan's deci- sion to join the Forest Service and fight the ever-present fires. Adrienne, who has longed to hear God's voice herself—being told that God re- sponds to silence, she says, "I had attempted si- lence in every form I could fathom but even my attempts felt loud" (p. 143)—has a vision of Joan being consumed by the flames she goes to com- bat. Joan of Arkansas expresses a progressive set of politics, sure, but the book itself is something of a progressive experience, evolving by the page. In the beginning, every character acts the caricature. In his campaign announcement, Charles VII pro- claims: "Washington's after / your jobs! your guns! your God-given rights!" (p. 21). Likewise, Joan is every teenager driven by conviction, the parish priest is pedestrian in his concerns, Joan's mom is simultaneously indulgent and aloof, the reporter is interested only in the horse race of politics and has no time for the reality of the pres- ent crisis, and so on. And people go through the medieval motions of being scandalized that this modern female influencer wears boy's clothes. The story seems to have no surprises to offer us. But a change overtakes the reader with the excerpts of the trial transcript of Joan of Arc. This Joan was described by her inquisitors as "not afraid to perform speak and / disseminate / many things" (p. 107), a crime with which many women are still charged in this allegedly more en- lightened era. We see in snippets how the Church authorities worked to break down her will, focusing less upon her message and more upon her form of dress, until finally it is written of her that "she had no further hope / in the life of this world" (p. 134). And this relates to the final section narrated by Adrienne, who ex- presses eloquently the feeling of how even the simplest acts, those necessary for sustaining life, are, thanks to our current economic system, in- herently tied to the destruction of all that sus- tains life: "And Mom left our wooden house in her car with rubber tires and went to

the grocery store with the big asphalt parking lot to get things for dinner, foods that were shipped there over oiled roads, vegetables picked and planted by

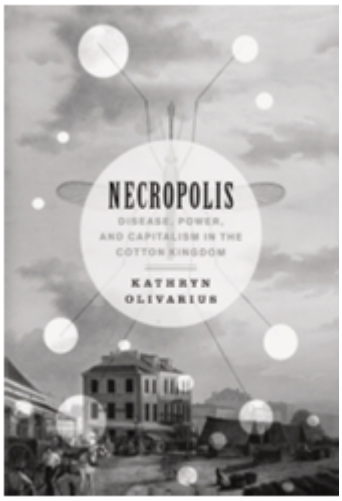
people fleeing bad Warmth and bad govern- ments, governments my own had ruined.” No wonder that she describes herself as a cowbird, a parasitic bird that, like the cuckoo, demands more and more from the songbird parents upon whom it has been imposed: “I was a cowbird. My town was built by cowbirds. We would die in barren trees in a dead forest on fire” (p. 146). Reactionaries often insist that the world is actually simple, and that if it appears complex, well, that is the fault of leftists and modern-day heretics who imagine colors when really there is only black and white. But the left is prone to its own anti-political solutions to political problems, its own proclamations that all we need do is elect this one person, or find just the right combina- tion of words and concepts that will somehow fix the regressive worldview of our reactionary bre- thren. And when those schemes fail, the disillu- sioned often give up hope about political participation and try to find salvation in dull practicalities, such as picking up trash or, in Joan’s case, going to fight fires one by one, be- cause the need “to do something,” the need to see immediate effects of one’s efforts, is so strong—never mind that so much of the damage to our world has resulted from efforts to save it from one thing or another. As Adrienne says of Joan at their tearful departure, “They loved me, they promised. They loved me so much. They would come back, they needed me, but they had to try to save something. They couldn’t save us but maybe they could save something” (p. 156). This hits hard. This makes Joan of Arkansas so much more than the modern morality play it appears at first blush. Wippermann is not merely retelling the story of Joan of Arc for today’s au- dience—she is fundamentally interrogating our history-long yearning for salvation, a word that might be defined as a solution that restores ev- erything to those prelapsarian factory settings and thus alleviates one of responsibility for the world from this moment onward. Interestingly, although they appear similar in English, the words salvation and salve do not descend from the same root word, with the former stemming from a root that means “to save,” while the latter has its origin in a word meaning “fat” or “oil.” The Baptists like to say, “Once saved, always saved,” but salvation is no substitute for a salve, which has to be applied regularly until the wound is healed. And as Joan tells us: “The Angels said / this world is / God’s own / narcissistic wound / but I think they were joking / about the trauma of Creation” (p. 60). There is no escape from the trauma of Crea- tion. This is the heartbreaking truth at the heart of Joan of Arkansas. This is also the hope Wipper- mann offers for healing and living.

--Guy Lancaster

Necropolis: Disease, Power, and Capitalism in the Cotton Kingdom. By Kathryn Olivarius. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2022. Pp. ix + 336, author’s note, introduction, abbreviations, notes, acknowledgments, index. $35.00, hardcover)

Kathryn Oliviarius’ monograph is thor- oughly researched and presented in an anecdote- rich style that should appeal to undergraduate students and general audiences. The book’s focus is on New Orleans—the Necropolis of the title— but Olivarius never allows the reader to lose sight of its regional and broader context. New Orleans was sustained by its identity as a hub of the American South’s cotton kingdom and of the transatlantic trade in both cotton and those en- slaved, bought, and sold to sustain its produc- tion. Its civic politics and civic culture, as Olivarius demonstrates, were also distinctively in-

fluenced by the vulner- ability of the Mississippi Delta and its inhabi- tants to yellow fever. Necropolis traces the re- gional history of yellow fever and responses to it from the Louisiana Pur- chase to Reconstruc- tion. Each chapter also has a thematic focus, in- vestigating disease and disease identities in the newly American city; the health industry and individual coping strategies; immunocapital; disease and public health policy; links between proslavery ideologies and disease denialism; and the decline of immunocapital in the face of new political realities and patterns of migration.



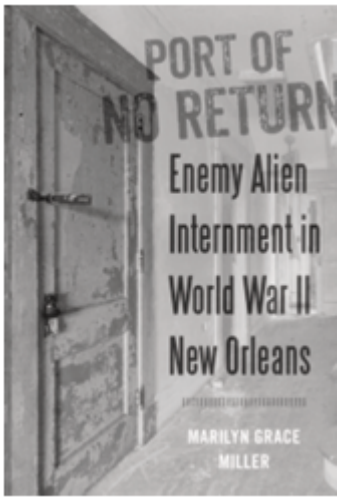
While this is primarily a social history of dis- ease, it is also a history of the Delta's place in the Atlantic economy, its dependence on slavery, and the United States' investment in maintaining parity with the imperial powers of Europe. The Louisiana Purchase itself and Louisiana's devel- opment as an American possession would be af- fected both by yellow fever and by differential immunity to it, as discussed in Chapter 1. Yellow fever contributed both to debates about the healthfulness of Louisiana in the fledgling na- tion, and to the careers of the white men who migrated from the northeast to staff the new po- litical and clerical posts of New Orleans. There was scarcely a facet of the city's collective life that was not shaped by the ubiquity of yellow fever. Chapter 2 focuses on how responses to the dis- ease were shaped by class, by profession, and of course, by race. Race, particularly, affected how doctors practiced, whom they treated, and what they prescribed for yellow fever. Throughout, Oli- varius includes contemporary Black perspectives, and acknowledges Black expertise in recognizing and treating yellow fever. The orthodoxy that the Black people who made up the majority of New Orleans' enslaved and free workforce enjoyed natural immunity was maintained in the face of available medical knowledge in order to support the racial hierarchy and the cotton economy. As Chapter 3 demonstrates, this argument, origi- nally developed in the Caribbean, was elaborated in the US in order to buttress the claim that slav- ery was not only necessary, but natural. The third chapter, "Immunocapital," also presents the most theoretically interesting con- tribution of the book. Olivarius defines immu- nocapital as "socially acknowledged lifelong immunity to a highly lethal, incurable virus" (p. 115). Medically, such immunity was unprovable. Socially, it was invaluable. Acclimation to yellow fever was a key factor in how risks could be taken and power wielded, particularly by the white pop- ulation of New Orleans. It affected both the elite marriage market and the prices at which the en- slaved were

bought and sold. And in the process of acclimation itself, “taking on disease risk be- came locally linked with white legitimacy” (p. 119). Chapter 4 demonstrates the distinctiveness of New Orleans’ (non-) responses to disease out- breaks. While other American cities—including Baltimore and Savannah, as well as New York and Philadelphia—increasingly embraced a range of hygienic reforms, New Orleans did not. The theory of immunocapital, and the ways in which it undergirded the city’s racial and class hierar- chies, contributed to widespread political and so- cial resistance to the public health policies that were typical of other nineteenth-century urban centers. Moreover, the city council “actively avoided discussing yellow fever even at the height of epidemics” (p. 159). Philanthropy could only go so far to provide the support that the city gov- ernment refused to those affected by the disease. Chapter 5 elucidates the link between “proslav- ery thinking and disease denialism” (p. 205). Both were ideologies that New Orleans not only depended on but fostered. To espouse health re- forms or to acknowledge the true costs of yellow fever were, increasingly, seen as disloyal to the city and to the South. The end of these ideological and economic

systems was neither sudden nor straightforward, as Olivarius demonstrates in Chapter 6. When New Orleans came under Union occupation in 1862, popular song and public prayer alike in- voked the power of yellow fever against the US Army. But while the deeply unpopular health policies instituted by the military government vastly reduced disease outbreaks, the rhetoric of differential racial immunity endured. And when Black migration rendered this less profitable, New Orleans' white elites sought to use the same myths of acclimation against new immigrant pop- ulations. But the decline of the cotton market, together with the catastrophic epidemic of 1878, permanently undermined the ways in which, for most of the nineteenth century, the rhetoric and reality of disease had been used to uphold sys- tems of power. Although Olivarius claims that Necropolis is not a history of public health (p. 8), I would argue that while it is not a straightforward history of policies and institutions, it is very much a so- cial history of medicine, and a rich history of public health in its most expansive sense. It an- swers core questions of the medical humanities about how the cultural meanings of disease are formed and, in some cases, enforced. Moreover, it is written in such a way that it could be pro- ductively used not only in courses on the history of medicine, but in regional and topical courses seeking to integrate this aspect of social history. Those seeking thorough theoretical discussion of the issues Oliviarius raises will have to look else- where; though biopower and biopolitical labor are central to the work and its argument, neither term is used. Nevertheless, Necropolis participates in—and should stimulate—rich scholarly conver- sations about the history of epidemics and their management. Olivarius' choice to prioritize ac- cessibility of style should make the book usable for advanced undergraduate and graduate classes. --Lucy C. Barnhouse

Port of No Return: Enemy Alien Internment in World War II New Orleans. By Marilyn Grace Miller. (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2021. Pp. v + 304, illustrations, preface, acknowl- edgments, introduction, epilogue, notes, selected bibliography, index. $29.95, paperback)

The singer and writer Jimmy Buffett de- scribed New Orleans, as "a gumbo, a melting pot of food, mood, mud and blood, where the Ca- ribbean begins or ends, depending on your point of view." New Orleans, the city at the end of the Mississippi River, is often perceived as a gateway to the larger world. Ho- wever, Marilyn Grace Miller's book Port of No Return: Enemy Alien In- ternment in World War II New Orleans, presents a different view of the city. During World War II, New Orleans was the site of Camp Algiers, an internment facility that played a crucial role in detaining enemy aliens. Miller's book sheds light on this little-known aspect of the city's history, revealing how New Orleans was not just a port to other opportunities, but also a place of con- finement and detention.



It is commonly known that Japanese Ameri- can citizens were detained during World War II, but Miller suggests that not enough attention has been given to the imprisonment of enemy aliens of German and Italian origin under the US gov- ernment's Enemy Alien Control Program (p. 5). This story originated from a radio segment about

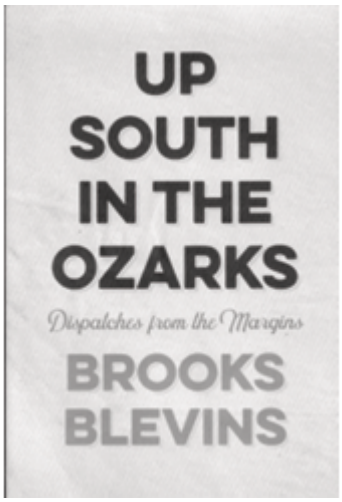
the history of New Orleans, created to celebrate the city's 300th anniversary. The author, Miller, uses the detention center located in the Algiers neighborhood of the West Bank of the Missis- sippi River, which is not far from the tourism hub of the French Quarter, to narrate the story of detentions during World War II and how they continue to influence the detention of immi- grants to this day. Miller divides her book into six chapters that are bookended by a Preface that describes the genesis of the book, an introduc- tion that sets the stage for the detention of aliens during the war, and an epilogue titled "A New War on Aliens as Enemies" where she argues that World War II detention practices have set the stage for detention of noncitizen populations today. Chapter 1 provides a history of the Algiers detention facility and how it became the site for the confinement of foreign aliens during World War II. As a historic preservationist, I found it very interesting that Miller described the efforts to preserve the facility by it being listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2019. Miller contended that "this designation will serve as a prompt to preserve not only the buildings . . . but also the little known history they contain" ## (p. 51). Chapter 2 discusses the fluid system of clas- sification for the aliens, especially the Germanic Jews depicted in Chapter 3 that were detained by US Allies in Latin America, but were determined not a threat, and even provided a path to natu- ralization. Chapters 4 and 5 highlight notable in- dividuals and those of noble birth who were interned at the camp. Miller argues that the term "alien enemies" represented "a broad spectrum of political tenets and actions . . . refugees, dis- placed persons, . . . impoverished or [who] had been separated from family members" and that the term was fluid and could change depending on the needs or desires of those making the deci- sions (pp. 157-158). Chapter 6 discusses the aid organizations, diplomats, and community groups that intervened on behalf of the detainees to help improve the conditions at the center or even obtain their release. Miller used the epilogue to frame the debate on detention of undocumented aliens at the southern border through the lens of World War II-era detention. Miller explored the actions of the Japanese-American community to bring at- tention to the detention of Japanese-Americans during the war and its acknowledgment by the United States government. However, she also argues that the type of detention practices at Camp Algiers during the war serve as a model for detention today. She chastises the government for allowing "the manipulation of detention pol- icy and detainee populations for political pur- poses and economic gain" (p. 207).
--Edward Salo

Up South in the Ozarks: Dis- patches from the Margins. By Brooks Blevins. (Fayetteville, Arkan- sas: The University of Arkansas Press, 2022 Pp. 260, introduction, notes. $34.95, hardcover)

Brooks Blevins is an author and historian who serves as the Noel Boyd Professor of Ozark Studies at Missouri State University. He's written many books about the history of the Ozark Mountain region including the trilogy A History of the Ozarks, published by the University of Illi- nois Press. His latest

work is a collection of essays, some previously published, about the various as- pects of the Ozarks region from race relations to popular culture to collections of folklore; this is a book that considers the region and the South in various ways. In his first chapter, Blevins discusses the Ozarks' "southerness" by measuring the region against multiple markers of the South including

weather patterns, Kudzu growth, and political af- filiations. Blevins finds that the region fits some- where between the South and the Midwest with the region often divided in how it considers its image (and other matters) along state lines be- tween Arkansas and Missouri. Ultimately, Ble- vins posits that southernness “depends on conscious affiliation with some historical and cul- tural notion of the South” (p. 23). Blevins continues his exploration of the Up South region by considering pastimes of fire- works celebrations in “Fireworking Down South” and of cultural depictions in television of the upland South from the Andy Griffith Show in “The South According to Andy.” By considering these and other elements of popular culture of the South and the Ozarks and how these portrayals reflect our ethos back to us as both entertainment and life lessons, Blevins is able to show that there are indeed many Souths in- cluded in our society’s vision of the larger re- gion, and he also shows how the Ozarks region is a part of that story through his own lived experiences. By first speak- ing to his own experiences in a fireworks tent in different parts of the South, Blevins puts himself in the middle of popular culture through his summer work as a young person. This section also challenges the view of a homogenous South full of romantic scenery with “the fireworks tent” acting “as a great social leveler” (p. 42). He fol- lows his chapter on fireworks with a chapter on Andy. This show has had a particular staying power and depicts a romantic version of the upland South in many ways. Blevins argues that the show does include a diversity of characters and situations, especially mountaineer characters and situations. Blevins argues that Andy con- tinues to work as a series because “We trust Grif- fith to be judicious, to never allow the stereotype to overwhelm a character’s humility” (p. 55). Ble- vins notes that the show depicts Griffith’s version of the South and not the actual South and con- tinues to be a cultural touchstone because of its humor and fuller characterizations of common tropes. These chapters work together to both challenge and uphold many ideas about and re- flections of the upland South and its inhabitants.



In his chapter titled “Rethinking the Scots- Irish Ozarks: Diversity and Demographics in Re- gional History” Blevins considers the common idea that the Ozarks region is homogenous, pop- ulated by mostly people of Scots-Irish ethnicity. Blevins points to the region’s German and other European settlers. He uses this information to discuss the myths surrounding the Scots Irish people, including the ways the term has been and is often co-opted for nationalistic purposes. He follows this up with a chapter on race relations in Izard County, Arkansas, by looking closely at the community of

LaCrosse in “Revisiting Race Relations in the Upland South: LaCrosse, Arkan- sas.” This chapter tells of the African American community which was formed by formerly en- slaved people following the Civil War. This com- munity thrived until the mid-1900s and is known locally to have had peaceful interactions with the nearby white communities, specifically with Mel- bourne. Blevins points out that though there are no records of violence between the segregated communities, this seeming peacefulness is due to the strict adherence to social norms by the Afri- can Americans in Izard County and due to the lack of in-migration to the area by other African Americans. These two chapters offer a more com- plete view of race and diversity in the Ozarks re- gion. In another chapter, Blevins discusses the col- lectors of folklore in the Ozark Mountains. Though he discusses many types of folklore, the bulk of this chapter titled “Collectors of the Ozarks: Folklore and Regional Image” discusses ballad collecting. Blevins notes the different in- fluences folklore collectors have had on the

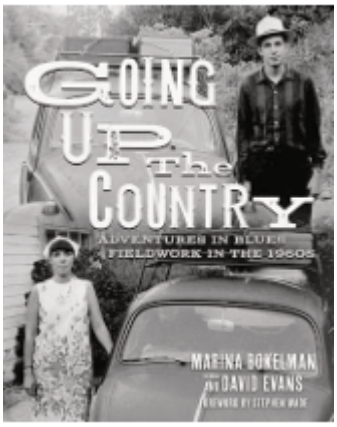
image of the region and why they’re important to the history and culture of the Ozarks. This chapter includes many important details about folklorists and collectors of folklore who have colored and preserved the folklife of the Ozarks re- gion. Blevins notes at the end of this chapter that folklore is focused on the past, speaking particu- larly about ballad collecting but making a broad generalization about folklore in the process (p. 186). In many ways, this view of ballad collecting and other collecting by Parler and Randolph is correct, but folklore as a discipline is also firmly rooted in the present, with contemporary field- workers working to collect, honor, and uphold current and emerging traditions as they exist today. He ends his book with a chapter that reveals his own roots and puts forth his own “acute sense of place” in the Ozark hills on his family farm. He reflects here about the ways academic life and farm life exist in harmony for those lucky enough to have a boot (or loafer) in both worlds. By using his own experience with the land to end this work, Blevins leaves readers feeling nostalgia for home and with a deeper understanding of the ways one can connect with a particular piece of earth. The experience of having a deep sense of place is often discussed in literature and cultural studies about the southern United States, and ending a book about the region and the larger South with reflections on home and hearth makes sense. This is a work that could have many uses for university students in humanities disci- plines or similar research settings, a very thor- ough and readable collection.
--Lauren Adams Willette

Going Up the Country: Adventures in Blues Fieldwork in the 1960s. By Marina Bokelman and David Evans. (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2022. Pp. xxv + 299, foreword, preface, appendix, notes, bibliography, discography, archival materials, list of photographs, index, $40, paperback)

In-depth writing on the experiences of field- workers is a welcome feature in recent scholar- ship in folklore and musicology. Biographical, autobiographical, and memoir writing adds to our understanding of the context of studies of traditional expressive culture, and these accounts also provide important documentation of the intellectual history of folklore and related dis- ciplines. Marina Bokel- man and David Evans bring their experiences as nascent fieldworkers into the forefront of their engaging volume. Both folklorists went on to make important contributions in the field. Bo- kelman moved away from an academic career as she engaged with a range of professional and per- sonal endeavors, including the coordination of music education projects in libraries. Evans went on to become one of the major authorities in blues scholarship, publishing major scholarship on a range of blues music and contributing to a variety of media presentations of blues and other forms of music. Bokelman and Evans’s book pri- marily is a presentation of their field notes from two major forays into the Delta and Deep South as well as accounts of

documenting blues musi- cians in southern California during their time as graduate students at UCLA. They give us pri- mary source information that enhances our knowledge of blues music in the Delta as well as vivid and personal accounts of the human ele-

ment of doing field research.



The trajectories of their own life histories add to the story. Neither are natives to the Delta region or even of the South. Rather, they were northerners who were primarily influenced by the 1950s and 60s blues and folk music revival. Bokelman was part of New York City's music scene, and Evans was strongly influenced by music scenes in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. They met when both began working on their masters' degrees at UCLA. Along the way, both became friends with musicians who moved on to prominence, including Robert Pete Williams, John Fahey, Frank Zappa, Dr. Demento (born Barry Hansen), and Al Wilson. The book takes its title from a blues song that they documented. "Going Up the Country" also became a major hit after Wilson's band, Canned Heat, recorded it and performed at major music festivals, includ- ing Monterey Pop and Woodstock. The tune has become a theme song in many films and video retrospects of the musical event at Max Yasgur's farm. The book provides important background information on their pre-fieldwork experiences, technical elements of editing fieldnotes for pub- lication, the technical details of photography, and a general context for 1960s fieldwork. Readers then have direct exposure to two major sets of fieldwork. The first set spans fieldwork from August 10, 1966 to September 16. The sec- ond set picks up on their second trek that began the next year on August 13 and lasted until Sep- tember 19. In addition to these main two sec- tions, we have tales from the field as they relate to their encounters with musicians in southern California. The book ends with accounts of their professional experiences following these sessions, and the book also provides excellent research ma- terials for discovering how they both used their experiences in the field to contribute to scholar- ship in folklore and musicology. The notes include daily chronologies of their activities, including their trip from California to Mississippi in a Volkswagen bug. They provide useful ways to understand how they assembled the book. A clear division of labor emerges. Bo- kelman's contributions focused mainly on 35mm photographic documentation, note-taking, and domestic tasks like cooking and cleaning. Evans was the primary interviewer and logistic coordi- nator, scouting out both musicians who could contribute to his graduate student research on Tommy Johnson as well as finding places to stay while traveling into an unfamiliar region. Readers opening the book may first look at the black & white photographs and ask "Why are these photos fuzzy and grainy" followed by "Why are these photographs so dark?" Bokelman and (presumably) the editorial team anticipated these questions as Bokelman writes of the challenges she faced in her

visual documentation. Her chap- ter titled “How to Look at the Photographs” pro- vides excellent commentary that relates to approaches used in visual anthropology. She also provides two major sections that explain her tech- niques using two subheadings: “Why are these photos fuzzy and grainy” and “Why are these photographs so dark?” In short, she chose not to use flash due to its staged look and she often had to push the black and white film in the lab so that the 400 ASA Tri-X film could be developed at 1000+. The technical results made it possible to shoot in low light interiors at the expense of seeing higher grain in the prints. Her approach results in an interesting visual record of 1960s cultural scenes. This record also, in turn, can be investigated on its own terms, as we see how her sense of her own self as a documentarian has been influenced by foundational work of social realist photographers of the 1930s—notably Walker Evans—and the work of early visual an- thropologists as discussed by writers such as John Collier Jr., Malcolm Collier, Edward Hall, Sarah Pink, and other writers within visual ethnogra- phy movements. Readers will enjoy the range and depth of writing within the many entries from their field- notes. The writing evokes a vibrant sense of time and place, and both Bokelman and Evans share

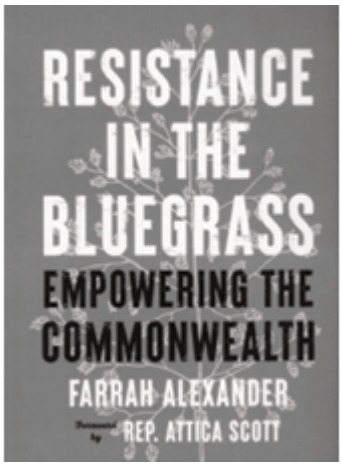
vivid encounters with blues musicians who either were well-known performers of earlier eras or who subsequently forged rich careers as blues musicians during the 1960s blues revival and its resurgence in later decades. By necessity, field- work is a highly subjective enterprise, grounded in value judgments that can yield positive or neg- ative consequences. On one hand, readers will enjoy learning of their direct exposure and the relationships that they shared with blues players such as Mississippi Fred McDowell, Mager Johnson, Houston Stackhouse, and others. The intimate contextual information from fieldwork provides invaluable context for understanding the social history of these blues musicians. On the other hand, the highly selective elements of fieldwork also are shaped by interests of research- ers and the era of their research. In the 1960s, the major approaches emphasized preservation of specific cultural traditions with some focuses on individual and social context. A new para- digm emerged by the early 1970s that expands contextualism to include performance-centered theory and methods. Reading their accounts through this new lens adds to our overall under- standing of the book. For example, Evans men- tions that Jack Owens ran a juke joint in Bentonia, but Evans provides no documentation to disclose whether or not he visited the juke to see performances in situ. Subsequent research re- vealed a distinctive regional style of blues in Ben- tonia. The book only hints at its possible existence. Faced with the limited time available in fieldwork, this kind of omission is understand- able, but it exemplifies a missed opportunity. The same selectivity is also clearly evident in way that Black fiddling traditions are only minimally doc- umented. They note the presence of fiddles in the homes of various musicians, and a portrait of Mott Williams shows him posed with his fid- dle, but emphasis is primarily on the guitar play- ing. Researchers are gaining more insight into the play of fiddling in Black communities, but there is a major dearth of first-hand documenta- tion of fiddling outside of these kinds of inciden- tal mentions. With 20/20 hindsight, these kinds of oversights become more understandable as Evans needed to focus on a specific project. These and numerous other elements within this excellent presentation of fieldwork provide us with highly engaging accounts that enrich our understanding of blues scholarship.
--Gregory Hansen

Resistance in the Bluegrass: Empowering the Commonwealth. By Farrah Alexander. (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2022 Pp. xiv + 250, foreword, introduction, acknowledgments, source notes, suggested reading, index. $14.95, paperback)

In her follow up to Raising the Resistance: A Mother’s Guide to Practical Activism, Kentucky au- thor Farrah Alexander brings us Resistance in the Bluegrass: Empowering the Commonwealth. Examining activism in Kentucky over many decades, this work presents vignettes of individuals and organizations that have made meaningful changes to communities and conditions for Kentuckians.

Individual chapters are dedicated to Poverty, Environment, Religion, Education, Political Representation, Racial Justice, LGBTQ+ Rights, Im- migration, and Feminism and Reproductive Rights. In addition to highlighting the work of well-known organizations such as Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and the Kentucky Health Justice Network, Alexander also brings at- tention to the work of everyday people doing the work in their communities to address local chal- lenges. Written in accessible language, this book

would be appropriate for young adults, book clubs, and others in the general public. Each chapter ends with tips and advice for those who are inspired to engage in community activism. Each tip connects to individuals and organiza- tions highlighted in the chapter and offers plain- language advice for getting involved and taking action. For example, in the chapter on Racial Jus- tice, the author includes “Help like Breonna. She dedicated her career to helping others in their worst days, saving gunshot victims, and treating medical crises” (p. 166). The death of Breonna Taylor at the hands of police officers is just one of many examples of everyday heroes in service to the commonwealth. While there is no way to present a compre- hensive work of community activists and activist organizations in the state in a single volume, gaps such as the omission of AIDS Volunteers of Lex- ington, made it feel incomplete. That said, this work is a good lay-person’s introduction to how average people can make significant changes in their communities by stepping up, taking a chance, and engaging in action to address in- equities where they find them.
--Lisa Perry



Contributors

Lucy C. Barnhouse received her PhD from Fordham University in 2017, and has been Assistant Professor of History at Arkansas State University since Fall 2020, having held visiting positions at the College of Wooster and Wartburg College. Her recent work in- cludes Hospitals in Communities of the Late Medieval Rhineland: Houses of God, Places for the Sick, and, co- edited with Winston Black, Beyond Cadfael: Medieval Medicine and Medical Medievalisms.
Patricia L. Griffen, PhD is founder and CEO of Clin- ical Psychology Services, Inc. of Little Rock where she maintains a private practice providing clinical services to an adult population. Dr. Griffen is one of the charter members of the Arkansas Association of Black Psychology Professionals and previously served as the organization’s president.

Jennifer Hadlock, MSW/JD is a community organ- izer, genealogist, and movement lawyer. She learned about the Elaine Massacre of 1919 as a Board member of the Fund for Reparations Now!!

and was sub- sequently invited by the Elaine Legacy Center to re- search land ownership and theft in Phillips County, Arkansas, and to document the oral histories of Black descendants of the Elaine Massacre.

Gregory Hansen is Professor of Folklore and English at Arkansas State University, where he also teaches in the Heritage Studies PhD Program. He is the author of A Florida Fiddler: The Life and Times of Richard Sea- man, and his publications focus on roots music, folk-

Revision #10
Created 2026-08-11 19:20:47 UTC by Michael Moore
Updated 2026-08-11 21:32:44 UTC by Michael Moore