

Association for the Study of African American History and Culture (ASALH)

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ASALH announces the publication of the first issue in the second century of *The Journal of African American History*, Winter- Spring 2016.

This latest issue of *The Journal of African American History* includes six original scholarly articles, two essay reviews, and fifteen book reviews. Among the avalanche of books and articles published regularly on U. S. slavery and the Civil War, some have examined the experiences and cultural practices of enslaved African American women. In “Self-Emancipating Women, Civil War, and the Union Army in Southern Louisiana, and Lowcountry Georgia, 1861-1865,” Karen Cook Bell documents the interactions between Union soldiers and women who were “refugees from slavery”; and the similarities in terrain that defined the patterns on self-emancipation as the Union Army advanced into and occupied the rebellious South.

California was a “free” state in the 1850s and free and formerly enslaved African Americans migrated to San Francisco and found employment on the docks and in the shipping industry. African American seaman traveled throughout the Pacific region – China, Japan, the Philippines, Australia – and some engaged in the commercial trade in many Asian cities. Eunsun Celeste Han’s “Making a Black Pacific: African Americans and the Formation of Transpacific Community Networks, 1865-1872” traces the activities of African Americans who traveled and settled in Asian cities, engaged in commercial trade, and moved back and forth across the Pacific recruiting other business people and seamen into their Black Pacific commercial network.

Moorish Science Temple of America is a unique African American religious institution, founded in the 1920s by Noble Drew Ali. Often viewed as a precursor to W. D. Fard’s and Elijah Muhammad’s Nation of Islam, Moorish Science contained cultural and ideological principles found in various other African American social and cultural groups. In “Shadow and Substance: Photography, Freemasonry, and the Moorish Science Temple of America,” Stephanie A. Wilks explores what we learn culturally by viewing and analyzing photographic images meant to convey a unique perspective on the “true” origins of people of African descent in the Americas. At the same time, the images reveal the connections to other African American cultural formations – freemasonry, Shriners, Muslims – similarities that made Moorish Science culturally familiar.

Before being crowned “Queen Mother Moore,” Audley Moore had spent much of her life engaged in campaigns for social justice. In “Reframing African American Women’s Grassroots Organizing: Audley Moore and the Universal Association of Ethiopian Women, 1957-1963,” Ashley Farmer documents Moore’s involvement in the New Orleans chapter of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the Communist Party USA, and the Sojourners of Truth and Justice, before returning to New Orleans in 1954 and organizing the Universal Association of Ethiopian Women (UAEW). These women activists stood up for the right of poor and working class black women to receive state welfare benefits; challenged capital punishment and the racial injustices of the Louisiana criminal justice system; sent petitions to the United Nations condemning the “genocidal” practices of U. S. law enforcement agencies; and pursued reparations from the federal government for the descendants of the enslaved Africans living in the United States.

Although they are considered the champions of African peoples and their heritage, black cultural nationalists have also been known to criticize the habits and behavior of the poor and working class “black masses.” “‘Zazi Is the Blackest of All’: Pan-African Nationalism and the Making of the ‘New Man,’ 1967-1975” by Russell Rickford offers analyses of the language and curricula used, and conferences and conventions held to prepare children, teenagers, and young adults to make a contribution to black liberation. The emphasis was placed on the development of “good work habits” and a strong commitment to the advancement of African people. While some utilized a military regimen to instill correct values and habits, Rickford found there was a narrowness in their conceptualization of the “New Man” that may have been unintentional.

Historically, African American workers were overrepresented in the most hazardous and physically demanding jobs in U.S. industry, manufacturing, and agriculture. In “‘Gateway to Hell’: African American Coking Workers, Racial Discrimination, and the Struggle against Occupational Cancer,” Alan V. Derickson describes the working conditions and health hazards faced by African American steel workers who maintained the “coke ovens” for smelting iron ore in blast furnaces. High rates of lung and other cancers among coke workers became an issue for union officials as more and more of their members complained and/or died from fumes and contagions in the infernal environment. Denial by steel companies and unions was countered by work stoppages and the findings from researchers for the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the 1970s who called for stronger workplace protections.

The JAAH Winter-Spring 2016 issue also includes an essay review by W. Malcolm Byrnes of four important books that expose “The Myth of Race” as a biological category; and one by Burton W. Peretti discussing two works that offer very different perspectives on “The History of Jazz.” In addition, there are reviews of 15 recently published scholarly works on African American history and culture.

The JAAH Winter- Spring 2016 issue is available for purchase from ASALH in hard copy, and for use in courses through Publications Director, Karen May, at kmay@asalh.net. The digital version will soon be available through “JSTOR Current Journals”; please check and make sure your university library subscribes to the program.

For more information, go to the JAAH website: www.jaah.org; or contact Sylvia Cyrus, JAAH Managing Editor, executivedirector@asah.net; or the JAAH:

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