

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

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The Journal of African American History

Special Issue:

“Gendering the Carceral State:

African American Women, History, and the Criminal Justice System”

Guest Editors: Kali N. Gross and Cheryl D. Hicks

ASALH announces the publication of the latest issue of *The Journal of African American History* (JAAH) Volume 100, No. 3 (Summer 2015).

The United States imprisons more men, women, and children than any other country in the world. However, African American women, men, and children are disproportionately represented in the U.S. prison population, mainly due to the targeting of African Americans by law enforcement officials. The overrepresentation of African American women in U.S. prisons can be traced to the post-Reconstruction period and the widespread expansion in the convict leasing system. Talitha L. LeFlouria’s “Under the Sting of the Lash’: Gendered Violence, Terror, and Resistance in the South’s Convict Camps” documents the oppressive conditions for African American women in southern prisons and convict camps, describes the gendered nature of the suffering and violence to which they were subjected, and discusses how these women resisted sexual and other physical assaults.

While the vast majority of African American women sent to prison were targeted by police authorities, some committed acts of violence that resulted in their incarceration. “Armed with a Knife in Her Bosom’: Gender, Violence, and Carceral Consequences of Rage” by Sowandé Mustakeem traces the experiences of Amanda Umble, convicted in 1891 of the murder of Effie Jackson in Kansas City, Missouri. In a jealous rage, Umble argued with and then stabbed Jackson, who died several days later. The article documents Umble’s flight, capture by police, trial and sentencing to death, pardon, and eventual release from the Missouri State Penitentiary. Umble was spared the death sentence through the organized activism of African American and white women’s clubs and other organizations.

The Great Migration led to the formation of various African American subcultures in large urban areas. In “Woman Slain in Queer Love Brawl’: African American Women, Same-Sex Desire, and Violence in the Urban North, 1920-1929,” Cookie Woolner examines African American newspapers and police and court records to explain how women who loved women were

portrayed. While African American and other journalists played up stories of violence among lesbian women, in their accounts they also revealed the existence of women only social groupings in Chicago and New York City in the 1920s composed mainly of recent arrivals from the South.

The campaign to “Free Joan Little,” accused of murdering a police officer who tried to rape her while she was incarcerated in Washington, North Carolina, became a cause celebre in the mid-1970s and has been the subject of many books and articles. Christina Greene’s “‘She Ain’t No Rosa Parks’: The Joan Little Rape-Murder Case and Jim Crow Justice in the Post-Civil Rights South” examines a previously unexplored aspect of the case and focuses on Little’s earlier encounters with the criminal justice system. Greene reports that Little’s experiences resembled those of many other young black women who fell in with the wrong crowd and were swept up into North Carolina criminal justice system, which at the time had the highest incarceration rate for African Americans in the nation.

The JAAH Summer 2015 issue also includes an Essay Review by LaShawn D. Harris on two recent books on African American women and men who have been caught up in the U.S. carceral state; and by Tiffany M. Gill who reviews new biographies on Eslanda Robeson, Mary Lou Williams, Pearl Primus, and Ann Petry.

The “Centennial Perspective” by Derrick P. Alridge, “On the Education of Black Folk: W. E. B. Du Bois and the Paradox of Segregation,” traces the great scholar-activist’s intellectual engagement with the positive and negative aspects of voluntary and involuntary separation for U. S. African Americans. In Sheila S. Walker’s “Centennial Perspective” “Milestones and Arrows: A Cultural Anthropologist Discovers the Global African Diaspora,” she describes her personal and scholarly encounters with African-descended peoples in North, South, and Central America; the Caribbean, the South Pacific, India, the Persian Gulf, and Africa.

In addition, there are also reviews of 20 recently published scholarly works on African American history and culture.

The JAAH Summer 2015 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, executive.director@asalh.org; or the JAAH at the **new mailing address**:

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