

In Search of the Racial Frontier: African Americans in the American West, 1528-1990, by Quintard Taylor. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998. 415 pp. Illustrations, maps, graphs, tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY LAWRENCE O. CHRISTENSEN, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ROLLA

In Search of the Racial Frontier is a well-written synthesis of the African-American experience in seventeen western states. Quintard Taylor begins with the African Americans who accompanied Spanish explorers in the West and ends with the composition of the black population in the area according to the 1990 census. He does a fine job of comparing developments in the various states and cities of the region, while at the same time placing the western experiences of African Americans within a national context. All scholars of American history will find this volume very useful in explaining the black West.

Taylor organizes this vast quantity of material into ten chapters. He devotes only ten pages to "Spanish Origins," taking readers from 1528 to 1848. Three chapters and just over one hundred pages treat slavery, free blacks, and the Reconstruction period in the West. In twenty pages, Taylor does an excellent job of discussing the important migration and settlement patterns of the 1875-1920 period. Many readers will enjoy the presentation of the experiences of the Buffalo Soldiers, which forms the substance of another chapter. The next four chapters provide a summary of urban black life between 1870 and 1940, a treatment of the black experience during World War II through 1950, and "The Civil Rights Movement in the West, 1950-1970." A short conclusion brings the book into the 1990s and succeeds in making appropriate generalizations.

The tables and maps are worth the price of the book. Twenty-six tables show populations of western cities at each census, "African American Farms in the West, 1900, 1910," "Slave Population in Indian Territory, 1860," and on and on. These illustrative materials add substantially to the narrative.

Taylor's balanced, comprehensive treatment is a tribute to his hard work. He has asked the proper questions of his material, and his answers make good sense. Those interested in state, regional, and urban history will profit from this volume because they can quickly make comparisons between their own locales and the African-American West. While Taylor's work on Los Angeles and San Francisco is extensive, he provides good coverage of all of the western cities.

An example of the author's command of his material is indicated by the following quotation taken from chapter seven: "By 1910 the

parameters of black urban settlement in the West were fixed. African American communities existed in all the cities of the region and were poised to grow with the general population of the cities and of the West. The African American communities in the region differed from one another—black Houston was a segregated 'city within a city' that grew from a nearby rural population while black San Francisco evolved from a population of globally diverse origins—yet as the twentieth century progressed, such differences receded. Western urban blacks now fought for greater economic opportunity, political influence, and educational access. Those battles were to ally black westerners with sympathetic whites and other people of color. They also incorporated the region's blacks into the national struggle for racial justice.

Writing the Range: Race, Class and Culture in the Women's West, edited by Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997. xvi, 656 pp. Illustrations, maps, tables, notes, bibliographies, index. \$21.95 cloth.

REVIEWED BY BARBARA HANDY-MARCHELLO, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA

Elizabeth Jameson and Susan Armitage have extended their effort to put women on an equal footing with men in the history of the American West. Their first book, *The Women's West* (1987), opened the way to the study of women's experience in the West; the current book examines women's experience through the richly complex prism of culture, ethnicity, and class. The West will never be the same.

Writing the Range includes 29 essays by 31 authors, most of whom are historians or anthropologists. The essays are grouped into seven sections that are organized topically, but also follow a loosely chronological order. Armitage and Jameson have written a general introduction as well as a historiographical introduction to each section and a brief introduction to each essay. The effect of these introductory pieces is to draw together the disparate essays into a coherent whole.

It is impossible to describe the breadth and range of this collection of essays. Only four of them focus on European-American women, but even some of those challenge preconceived notions about white women in the West. One is on Basque women, who have rarely been studied and, surprisingly, are members of an urban community. Another of the articles on white women is on cross-dressing as a preference or as a means of seeking economic equality. Most of these carefully researched, well-written, and thoughtfully analyzed essays take the reader into an

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