

Cultural representations showed that soldiers died in war and lived forever on the big screen, in books, and in iconic photographs. These portrayals both revealed and concealed the costs of conflict. Such images, Huebner claims, have “broadened public understanding of war’s terrors” (p. 282). It is not clear whether American society, focused as it is on the heroism and suffering of its own, understands the deadly impact of war on its allies and enemies, who endured much heavier losses in World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. This book, nevertheless, does shed light on the many ways that war destroys. It also helps to explain why each generation seems to have to learn this tragic lesson for itself.

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HASAN KWAME JEFFRIES. *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt*. New York: New York University Press. 2009. Pp. xx, 348. \$39.00.

A new generation of scholars is leaving its mark on the history of the black freedom struggle. This study of Lowndes County, Alabama—made famous as the birthplace of the Lowndes County Freedom Party (LCFP) that first used the black panther as its logo—fills an important gap in that history. The book shows that the local context is essential to understanding why and how oppressed people were able to find a way to gain autonomy. Hasan Kwame Jeffries provides historical evidence to recover a complicated and nuanced story of black political expression rooted in Alabama’s Black Belt.

This work contests the tenets of the long civil rights movement thesis that locates the genesis of modern civil rights activism in the New Deal and World War II; Jeffries thinks “it ought to extend further, both forward and backward in time” (p. 257). Activists in Lowndes County learned their freedom politics through years of struggle that began after emancipation. Instead of protesting, local people developed race consciousness. They gained slivers of black independence in two sections of the county through the creation of the Calhoun School and the Calhoun Land Trust in the late 1880s, and the ownership of land made available in White Hall by the New Deal’s Resettlement Administration. Those who moved away also contributed to the freedom movement. People who went to Detroit to work in the auto industry provided financial and emotional support to families and friends left behind. Jeffries calls these folks the “Lowndes diaspora” (p. 71). Those who migrated to Mobile and Birmingham to take war jobs became members of the local branches of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which also inspired them to join the labor movement in Mobile’s shipyards and in Birmingham’s steel mills. When they returned home after the war, such migrants brought back with them independence, organizing

skills, and courage to confront the injustices of white supremacy.

Lowndes County is not far from Montgomery, and when the bus boycott got started in 1955 some drove over to the state capital to offer rides in the carpools and participate in mass meetings. Ten years later, the Selma march to Montgomery cut through Lowndes County, which gave the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) a point of entry. Although this is a local study, its revelations about the work done by members of SNCC demonstrate the influence Lowndes County had on this important organization.

Stokely Carmichael learned valuable lessons working with the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights (LCCMHR) that formed in 1965, and he used what he learned to give SNCC new vitality. SNCC activists joined forces with non-traditional leaders who came from the working class. Instead of civil rights, Jeffries uses “freedom rights” to explain more accurately what they hoped to achieve through their organizing efforts. “They aspired to enjoy the fundamental civil rights and the basic human rights that whites continued to deny them, including the franchise, quality education, and the chance to earn a decent living” (p. 37). As a result of the unashamed physical violence and economic retribution that white supremacists employed to maintain the racial status quo, freedom rights activists rejected the nonviolent approach supported most famously by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. African American activists in Lowndes County, instead, believed in the efficacy of self-defense. Their version of black power went beyond gun ownership to include filing lawsuits, applying for federal anti-poverty funds, integrating the public schools, and voting in federal farm programs. Continued white resistance and dishonesty toward black independence inspired the creation of the LCFP, which made sense in a county with an eighty percent black population. They hoped freedom rights could be realized by using the ballot box to take over the county government structure.

Freedom politics as initially practiced by the LCFP included making the poor and working class a top priority, utilizing a democratized decision-making process, and rejecting wealth, whiteness, and previous experience as the standards for officeholders. By tracing John Hulett’s career in public service, which began in 1970 when he was elected sheriff, Jeffries analyzes how the nascent freedom politics of the LCFP could not overcome the corrupt political culture of Alabama. Over time this led to diminished grass-roots engagement and more neglect of the working class and poor constituents’ needs.

A variety of approaches were necessary to confront white supremacy and dismantle racial segregation. What worked in Montgomery, Birmingham, or the Mississippi Delta did not make sense in a place like Lowndes County. What was possible in Lowndes County would not succeed in Atlanta or Nashville. Jeffries’s narrative honors the complexity of this rich history and helps us to grasp more fully why the struggle

for racial equality continues. This is an important piece of scholarship that is deeply researched and well written. It provides new ways to think about the struggle for racial justice.

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TRACY E. K'MEYER. *Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky, 1945–1980*. (Civil Rights and the Struggle for Black Equality in the Twentieth Century.) Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009. Pp. xi, 410. \$40.00.

CLARENCE LANG. *Grassroots at the Gateway: Class Politics and Black Freedom Struggle in St. Louis, 1936–75*. (Class: Culture.) Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009. Pp. xiv, 324. Cloth \$85.00, paper \$28.95.

During the past decade, civil rights studies of the postwar period have expanded beyond their traditional emphasis on the U.S. South to encompass the struggle against racial discrimination in the North and West as well. Studies of the upper South, however, have been conspicuously absent from the literature. These monographs by Tracy E. K'Meyer on Louisville and Clarence Lang on St. Louis go a long way toward rectifying this deficiency. Both “border” cities exhibited elements of racial liberalism common to the North (voting rights and integrated streetcars and buses) and discriminatory practices widespread throughout the South (segregation in schools and other public accommodations), while at the same time maintaining a pattern of racism in hiring practices by local businesses characteristic of both sections. Louisville and St. Louis thus present a broader range of racial circumstances than any single northern or southern community could offer, which makes them particularly valuable for understanding the modern black freedom struggle.

K'Meyer's well-written, thoroughly researched volume is one of the most engaging community studies of the civil rights era to appear in recent years. She takes a comprehensive approach—no easy task, considering the long time span and the range of individuals and organizations of both races involved—and brings an admirable knowledge of the literature on civil rights to bear on her subject.

Louisville had a reputation for treating African Americans more fairly than other southern cities and for solving disputes between the races without open conflict or violence. The author returns repeatedly to this image, noting how it was used on occasion by white power brokers as an excuse for moderating or postponing racial change, while at the same time some black Louisvillians argued to the contrary that the city was, as one activist said, “morally obligated to make even greater progress to justify its leadership claims” (p. 2). During the postwar decade, “Louisville's black community could boast of modest gains against racial discrimination” (p. 43), including the integration of hospitals

and parks and some improvement in placement of African Americans in jobs in local industries and civil service positions. Yet in many ways, “segregation remained as firmly in place as anywhere in the South” (p. 44). The successful 1956 campaign to integrate the city's public schools, however, marked an important turning point for the local civil rights movement, even though a transfer policy for students left many schools virtually all-white or all-black, and not until 1959 did the Board of Education initiate a limited integration of teaching faculties.

The struggle to complete the process of integrating public accommodations brought a younger generation of African Americans into the battle for civil rights in Louisville, while also hardening white opposition to change. It took four years of protests and political pressure by an energized black electorate to achieve passage of an open accommodations law, but only the 1964 federal Civil Rights Act completely ended local resistance to equal service for African Americans in theaters, restaurants, and bars. K'Meyer argues, however, that it was unyielding white resistance to residential integration that inspired activists of both races to turn to new tactics of community organizing instead of mass marches or legislative solutions. The late 1960s also witnessed a turn toward economic issues, “a growing militancy and demand for a greater voice for the poor and black residents of the area, paving the way for ideas about black community control of local institutions” (p. 176). These efforts yielded some successes in the 1970s in the areas of law enforcement and hiring practices in both private industry and public service, but a significant racial disparity in employment remained, “and a new, conservative political atmosphere made it harder to attack” these stubborn inequities (pp. 249–250). K'Meyer's perceptive concluding comments about the ambiguous long-term consequences of the protracted struggle of civil rights activists is appropriate for a book distinguished throughout by its subtle, nuanced interpretations.

The books by K'Meyer and Lang have much in common. Both focus roughly on the same time period and deal with “border” cities. Most importantly, both authors eschew the traditional scholarly chronology separating the civil rights era, defined largely by the struggle over voting rights and segregation, from the post-1965 “black power” period, with its focus on black culture, economic improvement, and political influence. Instead, they find much evidence of both types of protest before and after what scholars increasingly recognize is an artificial, mid-1960s dividing line.

One significant difference, however, sets these books apart. While class is only one of many explanatory factors in K'Meyer's study, Lang argues that “the growth and development of a black working-class community of interest propelled, and shaped the goals of” the civil rights, black power, and other “major African American social movements between the 1930s and 1970s” (p. 3). Lang acknowledges that the black middle class also played a role. During the period he surveys, however,