

tions, always dissatisfied with existing understanding including his own. His new enthusiasms and projects continued until the end of his life, and it is too bad for us that so many were unfinished at the time he died.

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*Dark Journey: Black Mississippians in the Age of Jim Crow.* By Neil R. McMillen. (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1989. Pp. xvii, 430. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$27.50.)

Neil McMillen's well-researched and comprehensive study of African-American Mississippians in the half century from 1890 to 1940 is a readable and impressive scholarly work. Already praised in the popular press by senior scholars (C. Vann Woodward, "The Mississippi Horrors," *New York Review of Books*, June 29, 1989, pp. 15-17), *Dark Journey* is an extremely valuable contribution to the historiography of the pre-civil rights movement era.

McMillen's account, organized topically rather than chronologically, treats the black experience in politics, education, economics, criminal justice, and northward migration in persuasive and informative detail. If the post-Reconstruction electoral disfranchisement of black Mississippians is the most familiar part of McMillen's story, his accounts of segregation's legal structure and of the stunningly sorry state of black public education are both extremely informative.

"Throughout the Jim Crow years municipal laws regulating interracial contact were limited almost exclusively to cemeteries and jails," McMillen reports. "[W]hile the state's canon of racial exclusion or separation could hardly have been more complete, it was in substantial part informal," because "the forces of social habit and white opinion were in themselves usually sufficient to ensure that the races knew their places and occupied them with neither a statute nor a white or 'colored' sign to direct the way" (pp. 9-10). Blacks' "place," McMillen succinctly articulates, "was always more behavioral than spatial," for whites valued "hierarchy more than they feared propinquity" (p. 23).

Standing most prominently behind the entire edifice of racial segregation was informal and extralegal white sanction rather than formal proscription, for "violence and the threat of violence was the most durable legacy of slavery" (p. 126). McMillen provides a memorable account of the social centrality of lynching in Mississippi life during those decades, but he emphasizes that "lynching was but part of a larger pattern of extralegal physical coercion" (pp. 251-52) which most white Mississippians readily accepted. "Throughout most of the period," he reports, whites "did not generally regard lynching as a

lawless act," but rather as "a community-sanctioned extension of the criminal justice system" (p. 239).

Nowhere was the widespread tragedy of black Mississippians' lives in the 1890-1940 period more stark than in education and in employment. In 1900, 60 percent of Mississippi's school children were black, but black schools received only 19 percent of school funding; by 1940 the situation was comparatively even worse, with blacks representing 57 percent of the students but receiving only 13 percent of the funding. Those statistics help reflect one of McMillen's most notable themes, namely the *declining* rather than stationary conditions that black Mississippians experienced in the two decades after World War I. The prior period, from 1890 until the war, had represented what McMillen terms "the peak years of Negrophobia" (p. 118), but by most other yardsticks African-Americans were in a worse position in 1940, or 1930, than they had occupied at the turn of the century. The number of black lawyers, for example, declined from twenty-four in 1900 to five in 1935, but far more important was the agricultural scene, upon which the vast majority of black Mississippians were economically dependent. Not only was less land owned by blacks in 1940 than in 1900, but the sharecropping system, until its gradual demise, placed most black farmers in political dependency as well as long-term poverty. With sharecropping, McMillen writes, "the essential socio-economic patterns of antebellum agriculture survived . . . the plantation system remained intact well into the twentieth century and the great mass of black agricultural workers remained a dependent, propertyless peasantry, nominally free, but ensnared by poverty, ignorance, and the new servitude of tenantry" (p. 126). Peonage "and even de facto slavery were not uncommon" (p. 145), he notes, and only with the onset of the great northward migration, beginning during World War I, did substantial numbers of black Mississippians begin to escape from such economic and political control.

Black out-migration from Mississippi is perhaps *the* most central fact in the state's twentieth-century history, matched perhaps only by the phenomenal decline in the state's farm population. Between 1910 and 1960, 938,000 African-Americans left Mississippi; between 1940 and 1980 the state's farm population declined 94 percent, with the number of black farmers dropping from 159,000 to 9,000. McMillen terms the out-migration "a folk movement of inestimable moment, destined to transform not only the face of the South and the texture of Afro-American life but the very character of American institutions and values" (p. 263), and notes that it unfortunately "had a devitalizing effect on the remaining black community" in Mississippi, as tens of thousands of energetic people left in search of better, less shackled lives (p. 270).

The duration and complexity of the migration highlights one of the very few weaknesses of this book, namely McMillen's somewhat

ambivalent attitude about where and how to break off his chronological coverage. Although McMillen most often uses 1940 as his final bench mark, he remarks in the introduction that he thinks of 1930 as his terminus, for he plans "to treat the black Mississippian's depression story in a separate volume now in progress" (p. xvi). Similarly, McMillen's few comments contrasting the pre-1940 absence of black direct action protest with the post-World War II onset of the civil rights movement are indistinct with regard to what—if any—explicit political roots of the latter period McMillen perceives in the former. That answer too no doubt will come in McMillen's subsequent volume.

All in all, however, *Dark Journey* is a superb piece of scholarship, a book that all students of southern and African-American history will find valuable and informative.

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*Afro-American Women of the South and the Advancement of the Race, 1895-1925.* By Cynthia Neverdon-Morton. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989. Pp. 272. Illustrations, tables, notes, index. \$34.95).

Cynthia Neverdon-Morton's book on southern black women involved in social reform movements at the turn of the century focuses on the broad array of social service programs organized and supported by the American women Mary Church Terrell once described as "double-crossed" by the "burden of race as well as that of sex." The author provides detailed accounts of the work black women undertook in five southern states: Virginia, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee, and Maryland. In addition, she examines the extensive networks of black women's organizations in Baltimore, Atlanta, and Nashville, and documents the activities of women connected with the Tuskegee and Hampton Institutes.

Neverdon-Morton's portrait of Afro-American women in the South is reminiscent of an Impressionist painting. Like hundreds of tiny brushstrokes, myriad examples of women's social service contributions together form a picture of region-wide initiatives to change southern society. The author chronicles the efforts of black women to achieve their reform goals through work in women's colleges, working women's collectives, teachers' organizations, national black women's associations and in white dominated national reform movements. Throughout, she pays attention to the effects of urbanization