

## *Explorations in Sights and Sounds*

It was Buffalo Soldiers who pursued the Apache Victorio until he followed. They fought in the Lincoln County War and narrowly missed capturing “Billy the Kid” Bonney. Between 1875 and 1892, the famous 9th and 10th cavalry regiments were involved in the Indian “pacification” programs. They and other Black units also served strike duty, supported federal marshals in opening railroad traffic, protected railroad property, and maintained order in the wake of strikes. They safeguarded settlers and their presence discouraged additional Indian attacks. Farmers, ranchers, miners, and railroad construction workers often called upon them for help.

While praising the exploits of the Buffalo Soldiers, Billington does not address an extremely significant issue—the manipulation of one minority group by the government to subjugate another. When Africans first came to the New World, Blacks and Indians sometimes forged positive relationships. Some Indians during early colonial history assisted Blacks in their escape from slavery (though some tribes held Black slaves). The United States government deliberately pitted the two groups against each other, offering compensation to Indians for capturing slaves and inducements to Blacks for controlling Indians. For the author to commend Blacks for subduing “the hostile Indians” (201) seems to reflect a period when the phrase, “The only good Indian is a dead Indian” was de facto law. One may highly revere the bravery and patriotism of the Buffalo Soldiers in fighting for their country, but one must also critically analyze their role in the suppression of Indian people.

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**Howard Brotz, ed. *African-American Social and Political Thought, 1850-1920*. (Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1992) 593 pp., \$24.95 paper.**

*African-American Social and Political Thought*, originally published in 1966, is back in print—testimony to the durability of the writings it collects. The editor provides a selection of primary works by great African-American thinkers whom he categorizes into four mainstreams: emigrationists, assimilationists, cultural nationalists, and revived political nationalists. The works of such men as Martin Delany, Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Dubois, and Marcus Garvey, stand alone for their brilliance, but brought together, they provide a panoramic view of the diversity of African-American philosophies for Black advancement. weaknesses stem from what the editor excludes. The most glaring

While collecting an array of outstanding writings, this book's omission is that of African-American women. By excluding the writings of such women as Ida B. Wells, Sojourner Truth, Mary Church Terrell, and other Black women who contributed significantly in defining their community's social and political thought, this book contributes to a misguided belief that Black women were silent bystanders in the fight for racial justice.

Also omitted in this anthology is proper historical contextualization of the primary documents. It is impossible to fully comprehend the authors' positions without contextualizing their writings. For example, discussion concerning the DuBois and Booker T. Washington debates are stripped from the historical realities that surrounded them. Brotz dismisses DuBois as a misguided scholar whose "historicist-racialist preoccupations" (23), the result of the humiliation he felt as a Black man, ostracized the African-American community. Yet, he applauds Washington's efforts toward creating a colorblind society in which merit was the basis of judgment. The editor does not take into account the historical reality: Blacks were not judged by their merit but by their race. Successful Black men and women were just as likely to be lynched, disenfranchised, and segregated because they were deemed inferior by prevailing Anglo-American thought. America could never become a colorblind society while its whole social and economic order rested upon white supremacy, a fact which DuBois sought to illuminate through his scholarship, but one which Brotz fails to note.

Similarly, Brotz oversimplifies the position of Black "dominant spokesmen" (i.e. civil rights groups and the congressional Black Caucus) in his contemporary introduction. Pejorative in tone, he rejects their philosophy as one of self-pity that assumes "white racism is the determinant in a sociological sense, of the fate and future of blacks" (xi). While rejecting this philosophy, Brotz quickly applauds the "New Blacks" who hold that "statist policies subserving the myth of black exceptionalism" (xvi), not racism, created the current crisis in Black America. The editor argues in favor of "New Black" ideology from within a historical void, however, failing to recognize the virulence and persistence of White American racism. Any analysis of political thought removed from its historical context can yield uninformed results, as does this one.

While the primary documents collected in *African-American Social and Political Thought* are recommended reading, the editor's contribution is not—it is biased, exclusionary, and uninformed.

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