

Ogbar, Jeffrey O. G. *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004

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addresses is not meaningfully explored. These books take us up to the end of the Second World War. But what happened afterwards? How has the welfare state evolved? What kinds of activities were displaced and why? When exactly did the secularization of social services occur? What were the effects on women? There was enough evidence in these essays, many of which are excellent, to daringly engage with these debates. A conclusion, if not a bolder introduction, would have helped.

Although not as ambitious as it might, and arguably should, have been, this collection will nonetheless be a useful resource for historians of urban Canada, gender, the welfare state, and the postwar years.

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Baskerville, Peter A. *Sites of Power: A Concise History of Ontario*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. vi, 296. Maps, illustrations. \$46.95 paper.

Finding a good textbook that adequately covers both the pre- and post-Confederation periods has long been a disappointing task for those teaching a survey course on the history of Ontario. *Sites of Power* is well suited to meet this need, as it skilfully incorporates a range of available scholarship on the history of the province into a coherent synthesis accessible to undergraduates. Over ten chapters, Baskerville manages to examine a wide sweep of social, economic, and political history, starting with pre-contact relations among Ontario's First Nations after 9000 BC, and ending with the premiership of Mike Harris and the Walkerton tragedy of 2000. Although the book often hurries through time—the final chapter, “Modern Ontario,” discusses the period from the 1940s to the present in less than forty pages—from a teaching perspective, *Sites of Power* is clearly organized and ideally structured to serve as a text for a one-semester introductory course.

Baskerville has written a historical overview of the region known as Ontario, yet he warns us in his introduction that this region is essentially a fluid construction of identities, “a moving target” rather than a fixed geographical reality, and one in which the central determinant of power shaped the varied experiences of its peoples. Describing the easily romanticized pioneering era in Upper Canada, for example, Baskerville is careful to point out that our understanding of progress must be tempered by the recognition that the colony's development affected its inhabitants in profoundly different ways; that the physical process of settlement meant the displacement of Native people and the despoilment of the environment. “To a large extent,” he writes, “birthplace, ethnicity, gender, colour, wealth, and class determined individual expectations, behaviours, and rewards” (53). Similarly, Baskerville reminds us that the physical dangers of urban life, such as infectious diseases, fire, or impure water, were far greater for the poor than for the well-off residents of Ontario's growing cities. In *Sites of Power*, any nostalgia for a

simpler past is challenged by Baskerville's portrayal of a harsh, inequitable society, deeply divided by race, class, and gender.

Central to this line of argument is the significance that Baskerville gives to the role of Upper Canada's regionally focused business elite. Even though the great majority of the colony's people continued to live in rural areas throughout the nineteenth century, those who aspired to power quickly gravitated to emerging urban centres like Hamilton, Toronto, and Kingston, bestowing a degree of political and economic importance on the new cities that was entirely out of proportion to their size. Baskerville writes, “While most Upper Canadians farmed, their political leaders were more representative of an urban-centred, business-minded, capitalist society” (103). It was the members of the business elite at the regional level—the investors, entrepreneurs, and bankers—who increasingly dominated the Legislative Assembly, who lobbied for a stable political structure, and who benefited most from the granting of responsible government. The new political leaders all had vested interests in the commercial development of the colony, and the political alliances of the 1850s resulted from the recognition of business-oriented, urban politicians that their economic concerns should outweigh their religious or cultural differences. These same men, Baskerville argues, became the moving force behind Confederation and permanently shaped the political culture of the powerful new province.

Sites of Power is a revised version of Baskerville's earlier publication, *Ontario: Image, Identity, and Power*, published in 2002 as part of Oxford University Press's illustrated history of Canada series, and by including a variety of maps and arresting images, the new book keeps some of the visual strength of the original. While the content of the two versions remains fundamentally the same, *Sites of Power* has been designed for use in the classroom. It possesses the physical apparatus of an undergraduate textbook, integrating sidebars, subheadings within chapters, and helpful appendices with historical information on Ontario's population, governments, and economy. The sidebars, in particular, effectively enhance the text and provide opportunities for class discussion by highlighting specific historiographical issues, primary documents, or recent research. Baskerville's *Sites of Power* offers students a thought-provoking interpretation of the history of Ontario, prompting readers to explore the complex and often artificial representations of the province's regional identity, and to assess the disparate impact of economic growth both on those it empowered and those it marginalized.

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Ogbar, Jeffrey O. G. *Black Power: Radical Politics and African American Identity*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004.

When I began graduate school in 1990, black power in American historical scholarship was a chimera: largely dismissed as a chaotically anarchic, pathologically violent, and/or superficial

cultural response to the failings of the postwar civil rights movement, the stock conclusion was that black power was an impenetrable mess. Now, through the recent work of Nikhil Pal Singh, Martha Biondi, Robert Self, Peniel Joseph, Jeanne Theoharis, and Komozi Woodard, black power is beginning to come into focus as an intrinsic element in the postwar black freedom struggle, and one with deep historical roots in African-American intellectual history and the history of black urbanization. Jeffrey O. G. Ogbar's book provides a fine overview companion to this new black power scholarship and is especially useful in terms of the institutional genealogy of the movement.

Ogbar's book begins with the premise that black power has had far more impact on American culture than the integrationist civil rights movement or separatist black nationalism ever had. Seeing black power as emerging from a melding of both impulses, he defines black power as focused on black self-determination, self-defence in recognition of whites' ongoing violent assertion of white supremacy, and the forging of autonomous black spaces within American social, institutional, and cultural life. In so doing, Ogbar sees black power's greatest victory as its ability to redefine African Americans' place in American society as "far more than background characters in an ostensibly white drama" (3) and in setting the multicultural course for American racial liberalism.

Through secondary sources, published primary sources, and oral interviews, Ogbar provides us with a very useful and informative omnibus survey of black power. Starting with the premise that the Nation of Islam and its radical rhetoric and ethos of conservative cultural revitalization provided the ancestral foundation for black power in all of its manifestations, he traces an extremely valuable genealogy, culminating in the rise and fall of the Black Panther Party and parallel cultural nationalist movements like Maulana Karenga's Us Organization, and the incorporation of black power ideals into the mainstream civil rights movement. In so doing, he contextualizes black power beautifully within the society and culture of 1960s African-American and non-white America at large, especially in his exploration of the evolving mainstream civil rights response to and manipulation of black power's "threat" and promise, particularly as the civil rights movement moved north. He also shows specifically how Malcolm X's rhetoric and vision inspired—and the Nation of Islam provided an incubator for—black power activists of all stripes. Further, he demonstrates how the Black Panther Party, as a culmination of black power, borrowed from the activist ethos of civil rights—while rejecting its liberal integrationism—and the assertive and proud "blackness" and community self defence of the Nation of Islam—while rejecting its conservative insularity and script of respectability—in creating the new hybrid of black power. In overcoming the tactical limitations of these other movements, Ogbar demonstrates how the Panthers inspired similar activism among Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans, forever destroying the assumed normative whiteness of American culture.

Ogbar's book is especially fine in setting the record straight on a number of myths and puzzles about black power. For example, in carefully tracing the direct links between and evolution from the Nation of Islam to later black power projects, particularly in a case study of Los Angeles activism, he discredits any portrayal of black power as without institutional or intellectual antecedents. He also does an excellent job in exploring the role of the violence of white supremacy in the development of black movements writ large in the 1960s, thus exploding the dualism of "non-violent" civil rights and "violent" black power. Revealing too is his exploration of the Black Panthers' "lumpenism," or their reification of the machismo and violence of black male ghetto culture in an effort to mobilize the urban masses, and particularly already organized gang members. In carefully exploring the evolution of this strategic and ideological choice, he is able to unpack two confounding issues in the history of the Black Panthers: the extraordinary internal violence that racked the Party, and the seeming paradox of its simultaneous sexism and its pioneering rhetoric and action affirming women's and gay rights. None of these insights are necessarily original, but the scope of this work allows Ogbar to show their interconnections, and thus emerges a more complete and nuanced vision of black power. In short, this book contributes significantly to the paradigm shift in the historical representation of black power.

Given the value of this book, it is disappointing that it is not better edited. Ogbar's arguments and even his definition of black power emerge clearly only deep into the book and after careful reading because of an obfuscating introduction that tells us little of what is to come, non sequiturs and dead-end paragraphs throughout the text, and sometimes misleading chapter titles. It is also unfortunate, given the timing of this book's publication, that Ogbar could not enter into dialogue with some of the new scholarship cited in my introduction, most of which has found, perhaps because of its focus on local black activism and African Americans' intellectual outlook, more political ecumenism and flexibility among black activists and deeper roots to black power than Ogbar does. For example, given the bifurcation Ogbar presents between civil rights activism and black nationalism, and his implicit assumption that black power activists bridged that chasm for the first time in the 1960s, I would be interested to know what he thought of Nikhil Pal Singh's notion of a unified "black public sphere" stretching back to the 1930s, connected intellectually and ideologically—if not tactically—by a trenchant critique of America as a nation built on white supremacy and a vision of black freedom very much akin to Ogbar's definition of black power. The fact that such a question presents itself, however, demonstrates how far the literature on black power has come and Ogbar's important contribution in setting a foundation from which much more can emerge.

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