

focuses on the enduring efforts to abolish the iniquitous slave trade, and the enervating struggles of enslaved Africans for freedom and human dignity. The central theme of this section is that formal emancipation in the nineteenth century marked only a tiny step towards full citizenship and equality for blacks. In the four regions surveyed, extralegal barriers not only prevented freed blacks from fully integrating into the socioeconomic system but also fostered racial injustice and inequality.

Part IV, "Africans in the Americas since Abolition," illustrates how abolition of involuntary servitude changed the countenance of the Americas notably by initiating population movements, as freed blacks, determined to improve their life circumstances and conditions, entered both local and long distance migrations. This phenomenon, of which the northward migration of Blacks in the United States from 1910 to 1940 is a paradigmatic case, not only redistributed millions of blacks from rural area to urban area, from island to mainland, but subsequently transformed social attitudes and atmosphere in the recipient regions. A final chapter examines America's fragile ties and relationships with the modern states of Africa.

This text's merits are its multicultural approach and the interconnectedness of its four sections. Indeed, the historical sojourn of black people in the Americas is viewed within the context of global history. For instance, the black diasporic struggle for emancipation, political citizenship, and social equality is delineated within the context of the Age of Revolution—that period from the mid-eighteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century, when discontented and oppressed people the world over fought to free themselves from inherited socio-political, economic, and intellectual restraints.

An especial strength of the text is that the synthesis of the various parts is well executed. For instance, it is obvious in Part I that economic and not racial considerations underpinned chattel slavery. Yet it is clear in Parts II and III why the opprobrium of racism, which complemented the iniquity of slavery, was necessitated by the need to maintain an ethnocentric social order in a constantly evolving social climate. Additionally, while the text portrays elements of a common legacy vis-a-vis the shared and similar experiences of peoples of African descent, it does not yield to the common albeit false notion of a monolithic experience of Black people. In this respect, Black people are presented as active participants in what anthropologist Van Sertima called the rendezvous of history—that common meeting ground of humanity.

Overall *Africans in the Americas* is a contemporary and vibrant survey. And although its narrow focus—the diasporic experience of blacks—limits its use to essentially a corollary text for Caribbean, Latin American, and African-American history courses, its revisionist interpretations of the diasporic experience in a style that is clear and unpretentious, makes it a text that can appeal to students and instructors alike.

Broward Community College

Cheedy Jaja

Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt, and Margaret Jacob. *Telling the Truth About History*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1994, Pp. 322, Cloth, \$25.00; Paper, \$13.95.

This book—part intellectual history, historiographic essay, and salvo in the contemporary culture wars—attempts to rescue history from the clutches of an increasingly fashionable cultural and intellectual relativism. Though perhaps too demanding for most undergraduate students, this important book should be read by every historian whose students have argued that one opinion about the past is pretty much as valid as another, or who has encountered those who dismiss history as a form of literary diversion, the truth of which is only in the eye of the beholder.

No brief review can do justice to the many layers of this timely and thought-provoking book. The authors argue that since the 1960s old intellectual certainties and absolutes have collapsed in the face of a growing skepticism that "any form of knowledge, including history, could be modeled on the scientific method inquiry." While acknowledging the merits of the skeptics' case, in this book the authors successfully reassert history's claims. "We are arguing here [they state] that truths about the past are possible, even if they are not absolute."

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Not the least value of *Telling the Truth* is the authors' nuanced and masterful analysis of three centuries of western intellectual history in which they explain how the "heroic science" model of history (i.e. the historian's work is disinterested and value free; the history that is written is objective and "true") emerged out of the Enlightenment, and how that model (dominant until recent decades) fell by the wayside when a new generation of historians came of age in the 1960s.

It was the history profession itself, claim the authors, that opened the door to the skepticism and relativism they are trying to counteract. When history became "democratized" by opening the doors of graduate schools to women, blacks, and the sons and daughters of recent immigrants, the consensus view of the American past was put to the test and found wanting. Broad agreement about the national past was replaced with a medley of competing "truths" written from a variety of ethnic, gender, and class perspectives (the origins of multiculturalism). One result: a growing conviction that writing a universally valid history for an increasingly fragmented nation had become an impossibility.

At the same time the natural sciences' reputation for value-free objectivity was undermined by countless studies (often social histories of science) showing that even scientific knowledge was to some degree socially constructed and contextual. Finally, post-war deconstruction and postmodernism (e.g., Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault) advanced doctrines that challenged the very possibility that scholars could say anything about "the world out there" that was objective in even a limited sense. (A primary value of this book is its brief, coherent summary of postmodernism [of which deconstruction is a part] and its implications for history—an excellent primer, in other words, for those who finished their professional training before postmodernism became a staple of academic life.)

In the face of such intellectual currents, Professors Appleby, Hunt and Jacob attempt, in a balanced and reasonable way, to reassemble Clio's mansion. As beneficiaries of the democratization of education referred to earlier, and as practitioners of the myth-challenging social and intellectual history that has caused so much consternation to cultural conservatives of late, they welcome a certain amount of skepticism as an ally in the search for truth. "Complete skepticism, on the other hand, [they argue] is debilitating, because it casts doubt on the ability to make judgments or draw conclusions." In essence (and this greatly oversimplifies), they argue that even though history can never deal in absolutes historians must continue to trust the reality of the past and its knowability. As for those who claim that all investigations are inherently subjective and self-referential, those critics cannot "imagine the complexity of a human situation in which workable truths appear as the result of messy, ideologically motivated, self-absorbed interventions undertaken by myopic people whose identities may be vastly different from one's own." In other words, as imperfect as an individual's efforts might be, *collectively* we can discover "workable truths" that can satisfy our curiosity about ourselves and our society. And, by reading this book, historians will discover (or rediscover) many workable truths about our common enterprise.

Webster University

Michael J. Salevouris

Robert Blackey, ed. *History Anew: Innovations in the Teaching of History Today*. California State University, Long Beach: The University Press, 1993. Pp. xi, 324. Cloth, \$65.00; ISBN 1-878981-03-X; paper, \$22.50; ISBN 1-878981-04-8.

Bob Blackey served as vice president of the Teaching Division of the American Historical Association from 1992 to 1995. In 1988 he had assumed major responsibility for the "Teaching Innovations" column of *Perspectives*, the AHA's monthly newsletter. In 1993, at the midterm of his tenure as vice president, Bob published *History Anew*. It is an anthology of 43 articles by history educators. 41 of these articles were published under Blackey's aegis in *Perspectives* during the previous period, most of them since 1984.

History Anew is a contribution that has become immediately useful to teaching historians and student teachers. *The American Historical Review*, departing from precedent, published a short but