

the textbook. After thinking about the many reasons why the word "bias" came up in a rather negative way in some of the evaluations, I concluded that I would use the comments to incorporate more fully discussions of "bias" and historical interpretation the next time I teach American History II. Students pick up "bias" when they are exposed to material with which they are unfamiliar. Because the comments came up in relationship to class, I am more adamant in my recommendation of this series because the analysis of class is so often overlooked in American history. I see these comments regarding the text's "bias" as indicative of the authors' success in their intention to write American history from the "bottom up" and challenge the dominant narrative in doing so.

Finally, I would recommend that this series be adopted for introductory-level American and United States history courses. Volume two would also work well as a text for a working-class or labor history course. Both volumes are extremely readable. The authors have taken great pains to incorporate documentary evidence, images, and maps into the text in key places and I use them routinely as a basis for class discussion. For example, I found the reprints of anti-Japanese and anti-German propaganda posters issued by the War Department during World War II quite helpful in explaining the reasons why the U.S. chose to intern Japanese-Americans but not German-Americans. I find the overwhelmingly positive response by students to be the most compelling reason to adopt the texts. Once students are engaged in the reading, the text provides a great deal of material to analyze and offers students and teachers alike the opportunity to get beyond the events and details and really consider the ways in which history is a process over which everyone has an influence.

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Jack N. Rakove. *Declaring Rights: A Brief History with Documents.* New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Pp. 217. Cloth, \$35.00; ISBN 0-312-17768-2. Paper, \$12.45; ISBN 0-312-13734-6.

Garry Wills. *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government.* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999. Pp. 365. Cloth, \$25.00; ISBN 0-684-84489-3.

In contemporary America, ongoing controversies about rights, as Jack Rakove points out in *Declaring Rights*, have spurred an interest "in the historical origins of the Bill of Rights." It is hard enough defining or talking about rights, but when we engage in discussions about how rights were conceived of in the eighteenth century, the difficulty is only magnified. The author writes that

how we think about rights is a function of our education and upbringing, our history and our experience. Just as our ideas of rights are not universally held, so we know, too, that these ideas have not existed since

time out of mind. They have a history of their own, which we have to reconstruct to be able to think critically about what those rights should mean today.

The phrase "to reconstruct" signals the difficulty posed in historical study, indeed, any study in which the hermeneutic act rests not only on the rational adjudication between texts, but also what these texts *mean* for us today. While Rakove's work is heremeneutically weak (for instance, he does not address the effect of the simultaneous dual transformation the revolution *and* industrialization had upon shaping American ideology), he does a credible job in setting seventeenth to eighteenth-century rights talk within a limited cultural setting. This weakness might, however, be both an effect of the limited space that the Bedford Series offers its writers and the narrow scope of Rakove's study.

While the concept of rights emerged in Roman jurisprudence, Rakove does not go back this far in his archaeology of American rights talk; instead, he traces the evolution of American revolutionary and post-revolutionary conception of rights from 1776 to 1789 in accordance with its antecedent British constitutional history. However, the author is quick to note that "American claims to rights were not simply derivative or imitative of British precedent and practice." The new directions that resistance, revolution, and republicanism were taking rights talk sent American constitutionalism quickly on its own innovative way. The conception of rights underwent such rapid and radical changes that the framers of the Constitution could hardly keep up.

Rakove does a fine job presenting the difficulty and complexity that setting up a radically new kind of government entailed for people such as John Adams, James Madison, Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, Elbridge Gerry, and Richard Henry Lee. Americans, in their predilection for the facile, tend to get misty-eyed and nostalgic for a past that never existed in quite the monolithic way we imagine. We romantically rhapsodize the founders as if they all had more or less the same things in mind. We mythologize the past in much the same way as Thomas Paine engaged in his own "mythic drama of forming a new government" by imagining a context for the Magna Carta that never existed. Part of our dramatic recreation of the Founding Fathers assumes that they were better at solving their problems than we are with ours. By including some of the important documents from the debates, including two drafts of the Bill of Rights, we can see how tenuous the whole process was and how great men's minds persistently shifted between contrary ideas. Indeed, the inclusion of documents, the series' principle thrust, is one of the strongest aspects of the book.

If Rakove's text underscores the significance of understanding the origins of American rights talk in a complex fashion that eschews the simplistic and downright false presentation of this period in American history as strictly a conflict between Federalists and Antifederalists, then Garry Wills's *A Necessary Evil: A History of American Distrust of Government* is a reduced version of this era and its implication

for the development in our country of what Wills terms "antigovernmental values." Taking up the Federalist position as "today's weapon," Wills sets out to show that "the historical and constitutional evidence constantly used" in the argument that more power for the government entails less liberty for the governed "is largely bogus." Furthermore, Wills argues that the "government has a part to play" in our lives as we strive to become human.

Wills argues fervently and with careful attentiveness to historical documents using many of the same sources as Rakove, to counter "the ways our fears of government has found expression." The list, of course, is more numerous than Wills can address in one volume, but he picks some of the more common arguments. He groups these antigovernmental arguments under the headings of revolutionary myths, constitutional myths, nullification, secession, insurrection, vigilantism, withdrawal, and disobedience. As my colleague Dan Shiffman who teaches a course in American Democracy notes, Wills's cases make for strong ammunition in the classroom to dispel the ignorance about revolutionary militias, mythologization of the western frontier, and the so-called right to bear arms.

While Wills's arguments against government being a necessary evil are historically and philosophically sound (most are pro-Aristotelian and anti-Lockean), he offers little defense of his claim that government enhances liberty and freedom. In fact, the section of the book where we hear his arguments in favor of government as a necessary good comprises all of twelve pages, hardly sufficient to bolster so bold a claim that government is good in itself. Wills's argument *a fortiori* that since government enhances life on the trivial level, it enhances life on the significant level, seems commonsensical enough; we can hardly assume that our trivial experiences are necessarily linked to our significant experiences in the same way.

What detracts from the authority of both works is the failure to address two pitfalls of American historiography: naiveté about power and the continued refusal to examine and act upon the violation of the rights of indigenous peoples. We are today just as naive about power as the Founding Fathers were in their time. Instead of rehashing the archaic federalist vs. antifederalist debates, we should be addressing the real threats to democracy: multinational corporate hegemonic control over governments and their respective militaries, and, in our own country, hostility toward third party politics. Ultimately, Wills's book fails to take a hard look at the limitations of American constitutionalism.

While both texts can be useful in American history courses, Rakove's is more suited (because of its degree of specialization) to upper-division classes in colonial American history and American political philosophy. Rakove's book is the more rigorously academic work with strong footnotes and a selected bibliography. As if envisioning its use as a textbook, that author has included a short list of seven questions for student consideration. Wills's book has a notes section with some excellent resources on the specific arguments he makes in the course of the work;

however, he often paints a sweeping picture of specific events, such as the Wyoming range war (1886-1892) and McCarthyism and these sections will need to be enhanced by the instructor.

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Catherine Clinton, ed. *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South*. Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Pp. xi, 244. Cloth, \$35.00; ISBN 0-19-513683-7. Paper, \$17.95; ISBN 0-29-513684-5.

Catherine Clinton has edited a collection of essays that derive from a conference held in April 1998 to discuss issues relating to family, loyalty, and conflict within the Civil War and Reconstruction South. *Southern Families at War* covers a variety of topics in great detail, showing the diversity of experiences of blacks and whites, men and women. Each essay relies heavily on primary sources with enough secondary sources cited to provide background.

The first three essays discuss various aspects of slave and freedmen's marriages. Some former slaves went to great lengths after the war to find their families, including placing expensive advertisements in newspapers and journals aimed at African Americans. Other former slaves seemed content to leave old marriages behind when they started their lives as freedmen. The war itself played havoc with slave families, especially in areas where fighting occurred and where the men escaped to join the Union army.

White families also suffered during and after the war. White women petitioning the Confederate government to let their men come home used the argument of family necessity. Planter families were devastated by the loss of the slaves and had to find new ways to survive, both physically and as families, after the war. Marriage patterns did not change as much as might be expected, but the urgency of war caused some women to make hasty decisions and poor marriages. There were, of course, many widows in the Confederacy who struggled either to find a suitable new husband or to make ends meet without one. Some white women found solace in religion, and they kept diaries that provide an interesting glimpse into the mindset of the Southern elite woman. The war changed family structures, as well. Old gender roles did not survive the exigencies of war, and women took more powerful positions in families where men were absent.

Religion was an important aspect of Southern society. Some Jews converted to Christianity to avoid the stigma of being different, and foreign-born Confederates went to great lengths to prove their loyalty. Rhetoric of an afterlife where families would be reunited kept many soldiers in the field and reinforced Confederate ideals.