

is a timely narrative history accessible to the general reader. It should serve as a valuable supplementary text for the history classroom at both the collegiate and secondary levels.

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**Henry Louis Gates, Jr. And Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, eds. *Harlem Renaissance Lives: From the African American National Biography*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. 608. Cloth, \$37.34; ISBN 13: 978-0195387957.**

With hundreds of accessible entries on the lives of African Americans directly or indirectly associated with this period, *Harlem Renaissance Lives* is an ambitious effort to highlight, and sometimes uncover, the role of African Americans in shaping the United States in the twentieth century. While the entries are brief, the book's strength is its breadth with portraits of not only writers, artists, actors, and musicians but also educators, civil rights and labor activists, entrepreneurs, athletes, clergy, and aviators. Students of history will find familiar figures of the period such as Langston Hughes, Josephine Baker, Duke Ellington, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. However, the real value of the work is in highlighting, however briefly, the lives of hundreds of lesser-known African Americans. Some figures, such as educator Roscoe Bruce, the son of a U.S. Senator, grew up relatively privileged, but many of the biographies involve African-Americans whose unlikely contributions begin with a background that included slavery and sharecropping. Regardless, each entry includes a valuable bibliography and information about relevant primary sources such as an obituary and archival collections.

Although Harlem, as the "Mecca of the New Negro," provides a common thread to the varied biographical portraits, most of the individuals began their lives far from New York. These stories often originate in small towns throughout the South and Midwest and other portraits begin in the Caribbean, Europe, Egypt, and Canada. Thus the biographies, especially taken as a whole, illuminate the history of race, migration, and urbanization in twentieth-century America. The lives of individuals reveal the contours of race and culture within a modernizing American society. For example, Charles Chestnutt, born in Ohio in 1858, forged a career as a writer based in part on his experience with his family's multiracial roots in North Carolina before and after the Civil War. Elsewhere, Laura Bowman, a biracial actress born in Quincy, Illinois, in 1881, struggled to find professional success despite the racism prevalent in American theater and film. Many others found the cultural and intellectual milieu of Harlem a fertile ground for individual growth that eventually spoke to the condition of African Americans throughout the nation.

Unfortunately, the success of *Harlem Renaissance Lives* in illustrating the experiences of individuals is also the book's central weakness. The introduction is less

than four pages and, in contrast to other reference books such as the *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, the collection fails to include any thematic chapters that could assist readers in making meaningful connections between the biographies and the broad context of American history. Students of history would benefit from entries on such subjects as the Great Migration, the "New Negro," jazz, literature, and industrialization. A focus on individuals leaves little room for important organizations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League or significant historical forces such as black nationalism, the New Deal, and suburbanization. Teachers and students will have to look elsewhere to find ways to use these valuable portraits of individuals to ultimately enrich the larger historical narrative of the United States.

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**Troy Jackson. *Becoming King: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Making of a National Leader*. Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008. Pp. 272. Cloth, \$35.00p ISBN 978-0-8131-2520-6.**

Much has been written about the Montgomery bus boycott of 1955-56 and of the life and times of Martin Luther King, Jr. Yet Troy Jackson's fine book offers some fresh perspectives on both Montgomery and the impact it had on King's subsequent leadership in the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. Jackson brings to his story of King and Montgomery credentials both as a professional historian and a clergyman. At the present, he is senior pastor at University Christian Church in Cincinnati. The basic theme of *Becoming King* is that racial and social conditions existing in Montgomery at the time of Rosa Parks's famous arrest in December 1955 played a crucial role in shaping King's social and religious philosophy of racial justice after 1960, thus helping define his leadership of the national civil rights movement until his death in 1968.

Jackson believes that too little attention has been given to understanding how diverse class and social circumstances within Montgomery's black community influenced the direction of the bus boycott and King's role in it. The movement involved King with long time black social activists like Rosa Parks, E.D. Nixon, Jo Ann Robinson, Rufus Lewis, and his controversial predecessor at Dexter Avenue Baptist, Vernon Johns. Leadership of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) also brought him into contact with the few courageous whites of Montgomery, women such as Virginia Durr, Juliette Morgan, Olive Andrews, Clara Rutledge, as well as Robert Graetz, who was pastor of an African American church. The author gives considerable attention to the difficulties created by Montgomery's white establishment during the boycott and the increased presence of racist organizations such as the White Citizens Council and Ku Klux Klan.

But it is in his analysis of the historic tensions within the African American community, among black working and professional classes, black churches, and certain