

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

conflicting economic, political, and social priorities, that allows us to perceive the manner in which King's leadership was as much shaped by the people he led as it was by his own beliefs and tactics. The author's involvement with the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project at Stanford University gave him a special opportunity to explore in depth King's earliest religious writings and sermons prior to 1955 and contrast them with his Montgomery experience and the 1960s.

Jackson concludes by describing the manner in which the three years following the successes of the bus boycott made King into a national figure and eventually drew him away from his ministry at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church and the MIA. Having gained national attention as the most celebrated civil rights figure, King moved to the leadership of the national Southern Christian Leadership Conference based in Atlanta. Jackson notes that despite the successes of the MIA, even before King left, the organization was in decline and racial conditions, especially for many black working-classes, remained difficult. Violence toward blacks in Montgomery did not cease with the end of racial segregation of the buses. "In the final analysis," Jackson notes, "the bus boycott did more for King and the emerging national civil rights movement than it did for the broader African American community in Montgomery."

Becoming King would be a wonderful addition for advanced high school and college students involved in history, religion, sociology, or any number of fields concerned with the study of racial issues and social movements. The bibliographical references, both primary and secondary, along with the author's extensive reference notes and Clayborne Carson's introduction, are alone worth the purchase of the book. Jackson writes with clarity, and the themes he explores offer a thoughtful basis for debate and discussion not only about King and the civil rights era but the complexities and challenges of social change in our society.

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