

Almost every major Ohio River town in Indiana had at least one threatened racial cleansing, and in communities as diverse as Greensburg and Decatur, some whites attempted and sometimes succeeded in driving African Americans from their midst. In the process, Jaspin's work will be modified, as scholars uncover the stories in their full local complexity. We should be thankful to Jaspin for alerting us to this history and reminding us that such atrocities were not limited to the South.

RICHARD NATION is associate professor of history at Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti, and the author of *At Home in the Hoosier Hills: Agriculture, Politics, and Religion in Southern Indiana, 1810-1870* (2005) and "Violence and the Rights of African Americans in Civil War-Era Indiana: The Case of James Hays," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 100 (September 2004). He is co-editing, with Stephen Towne, *Indiana's War: The Civil War in Documents*, forthcoming from Ohio University Press.



Race to the Frontier
 "White Flight" and Westward Expansion

By John V. H. Dippel

(New York: Algora Publishing, 2005. Pp xi, 337. Notes, selected bibliography, index. Cloth-bound, \$28.95; paperbound, \$22.95.)

John V. H. Dippel provocatively deploys the modern decampment of whites to the suburbs as an organizing metaphor for his argument that the desire to distance themselves from African Americans motivated successive waves of white "plain folk" to relocate ever farther westward. At the argument's core is a demographic genealogy of Free Soil ideology, the northern antebellum vision of the Midwest and trans-Mississippi territories as the dominion of free white farmers, whose material opportunities would be maximized and labor ennobled by the absence of slavery. Many Free Soilers were unapologetically racist, ascribing the degradations of slavery as inherent characteristics of all African

Americans. Although Dippel's emphasis on the anti-black element of frontier development is buttressed by existing scholarship, his sweeping synthesis relies on too many partial inferences to be fully persuasive, let alone to reconfigure our understanding of either westward expansion or of American racial ideology.

Dippel identifies the seeds of Free Soil prejudice in seventeenth-century Virginia and follows white non-slaveholding southerners who planted those seeds in frontier zones from the Virginia Piedmont all the way to Oregon and California. Rather than analyze race as a historically contingent cultural construct, he treats it as an essentially ingrained hatred from the

time of Nathaniel Bacon's insurgency to Abraham Lincoln's ascendancy. In this formulation, white migrants despised blacks and had no desire to share either the unregulated freedom of frontier zones or the fruits of the subsequent rural economy.

Dippel's case for racist continuity relies on census data which indicates impressive numbers of white Virginians, Kentuckians, and their descendants residing in the southern tier of the Old Northwest (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois), as well as in Missouri and subsequent western territories. He observes that more Kentuckians emigrated to free states than to slave states and indicates that one-third of Oregonians were of southern origins, including almost half of the delegates to the territory's 1857 constitutional convention. Dippel's statistical analysis is especially useful when he is able to link racist legislation and state constitutional provisions to politicians from particular districts where southerners and former southerners settled most heavily. But even these numbers suggest what white plain folk thought about race, without confirming that the desire to be free of exposure to black people was, in and of itself, a principle motivation for moving. Moreover, as Dippel's own account indicates, western migrants from the North to places as far away as Oregon advocated for the same sorts of racially exclusive policies as their southern-descended counterparts.

Dippel's treatment of Free Soil ideology as a persistent southern folk-

way with important political manifestations can be quite informative. The final chapter of the book features the story of Tennessee-born, Missouri-raised Peter H. Burnett as an advocate of black exclusion in both the Oregon and California territories. Several hundred miles away from established slave states and in the virtual absence of African Americans, anti-black racism constituted an important force in defining the values of the frontier. Earlier in the book, Dippel provides a brief, effective sketch of Jonathan Jennings's party as it forestalled the spread of slavery to Indiana while also seeking to minimize the black presence in the Hoosier state by refusing to extend the franchise to free blacks.

A more extensive and systematic incorporation of the voices, visions, and stories of specific plain folk and their representatives would have greatly strengthened this study. The virtual absence of American Indians from this book on race and the frontier is also problematic. Ultimately, the sweeping argument of *Race to the Frontier* outpaces its evidence and its methods.

DAVID GELLMAN is associate professor of history at DePauw University, Greencastle, Indiana. He is the author of *Emancipating New York: The Politics of Slavery and Freedom, 1777-1827* (2006) and co-editor of *Jim Crow New York: A Documentary History of Race and Citizenship, 1777-1877* (2003).