

networks. I would have liked to see some information about African American men's organizations and how they connected to both the women's organizations and to Chicago politics during this period. But this is a small quibble. *For the Freedom of Her Race* is well-organized, nicely written, and makes an important contribution to our knowledge of African American women's history and poli-

tics, and to our understanding of the sometimes messy and complicated processes by which political realignments occur.

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Feminist Frontiers
Women Who Shaped the Midwest
 Edited by Yvonne J. Johnson

(Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 2010. Pp. xxv, 206. Maps, illustrations, notes, index. \$29.95.)

This volume contains eleven biographical essays on midwestern women from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to editor Yvonne J. Johnson, the collection grew out of her interest in gathering stories of midwestern women's activism. Johnson argues that the Midwest is unique in American women's history because of its transformation over the nineteenth century from farmland to an agricultural and industrial powerhouse. According to Johnson, the region also has a reputation as a crucible for reform, as the mobility of its male and female inhabitants "may have contributed to a more socially and politically progressive spirit" (p. xi). The essays are loosely held together by their focus on women across the Midwest involved in some type of reform; and while many of the

women profiled had some feminist tendencies, what links them is a notion of a "universally recognized belief in human equality" (p. x). Each essay is a biographical sketch of one woman, and her reform efforts, attempts at reform, or thoughts about reform, throughout her life. While each essay has its merits, not all of the lives of the women included support the editor's thesis, weakening the collection overall.

Johnson defines the Midwest as a twelve-state region from North Dakota to Kansas to Ohio, and the studies include women who were active in both its rural and urban areas. Subjects range from Frances Dana Gage, who famously allowed former slave Sojourner Truth to speak at an 1851 woman suffrage convention in Akron, Ohio, and who coined

(with Truth's approval) the refrain "Ar'n't I a Woman?" in her rewriting of Truth's speech, to Genora Dollinger, who blended feminist and union activism during her participation in the 1937 Flint sit-down strikes against General Motors and afterward.

Some of the women profiled, unlike Gage and Dollinger, do not demonstrate a belief in human equality, much less feminism or social reform. For example, Mary Ellen Rowe argues that Missourian Mary Sibley owned six slaves and could not have run her farm and school without them; according to Rowe, Sibley "did her duty as she saw it" (p. 29). South Dakotan Marietta M. Bones turned from supporting woman suffrage to actively campaigning against it, delaying the passage of suffrage in the state for twenty-eight years after it was first on a statewide ballot in 1890 (p. 81). Taken as a whole, this essay collection leaves the impression that midwestern women, with the exceptions of Gage, Dollinger, and Harriet Friedman Woods, tended toward moderate, local, and conser-

vative reform efforts and overall acquiescence with the gender roles of their times. This impression undermines the editor's original intent to show the "more socially and politically progressive spirit" evident in midwestern women's experiences.

This volume introduces many lesser-known women into the historical landscape of the Midwest, and Johnson's call for more research on how women shaped the social, political, and educational culture of the region is well merited. However, this collection would have benefitted from a tighter and more rigorous focus on how ideas and ideals of feminism have changed across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when viewed through the lives and actions of midwestern women.

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Good, Reliable, White Men
Railroad Brotherhoods, 1877-1917
 By Paul Michael Taillon

(Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009. Pp. xvii, 296. Illustrations, notes, index. Cloth-bound, \$75.00; paperbound, \$25.00.)

Paul Michael Taillon has written a much-needed study of railroaders, which focuses primarily on the run-

ning trades. While earlier studies by Walter Licht and Sheldon Stromquist examine railroaders' work life, Tail-