

### *Minority Victory*

#### *Gilded Age Politics and the Front Porch Campaign of 1888*

By Charles W. Calhoun

(Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008. Pp. xi, 243. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliographic essay, index. \$29.95.)

In this study of the 1888 presidential election, which pitted incumbent Democrat Grover Cleveland, against Republican Benjamin Harrison of Indiana, Charles W. Calhoun examines the political issues that the nation faced in the 1880s (most notably the protective tariff); reflects on the ups and downs of Cleveland's administration; and follows the complex maneuvering that led the Republican Party to nominate Harrison, who was something of a dark horse.

Calhoun draws on extensive primary source material—including campaign documents, speeches, private letters, and a variety of other archival materials—to examine the issues, personalities, and political machinations that led to Harrison's narrow margin of victory in the electoral college.

A notable feature of the election was Harrison's decision to campaign from his front porch and other locations in Indianapolis, rather than to tour the country. Such a strategy no doubt enabled him to seem more dignified, more presidential, by giving the impression that his supporters were flocking to him. In later elections, fellow Republicans William McKinley and Warren Harding would use a similar method with equal effect. While Cleveland, too, stayed home, he did little campaigning. Har-

rison campaigned aggressively, delivering, by Calhoun's count, "over ninety speeches to more than 300,000 listeners" (p. 133). Shorthand reporters, wire services, and mass production printing insured that the words he uttered in Indianapolis reached the whole country by the next day.

Calhoun's arduously gathered primary sources allow him to break free of previous thought about this period. He employs this information to shatter the myth that the era's politics were tedious and the public unmotivated, and he convincingly demonstrates several modern aspects of the campaign: the influence of business and labor, the use of mass media to market the candidates, and the careful calculation of political strategies. Calhoun concludes that President McKinley would later pick up "where Harrison had left off" and that "it was Harrison, much more than Cleveland, who set the stage for the creation of the modern presidency" (p. 189).

Three appendices give the ballot totals from the Republican National Convention, state-by-state election results, and the text of Harrison's inaugural address. Extensive references and a well-prepared index offer great help to the reader. If one desires to quibble, this book could have spent

more time examining the campaign itself, rather than the events that led up to it, but Calhoun's decision to dive so deeply into the election's background is a legitimate choice. The author might also have given more attention to the influence of James Garfield's previous front porch campaign. All the same, readers interested in the creation of the modern imperial presidency—not to mention those who want to learn more about

the contributions of one of Indiana's favorite sons—would do well to give this excellent book careful examination.

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*The Condemnation of Blackness*  
*Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America*  
 By Khalil Gibran Muhammad

(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010. Pp. xi, 381. Illustrations, manuscript sources, notes, index. \$35.00.)

Khalil Gibran Muhammad's important book, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern America*, examines how emerging discourses on black criminality marred African Americans' aspirations for racial equality and shaped broader notions of race in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago. With a temporal focus on the period between 1890 and the 1940s, Muhammad demonstrates how crime statistics, conveyed through census data and pseudo-scientific studies, aided the transformation of European ethnic immigrants from outsiders to white Americans—and thusly, white racists and supremacists. At the same time, such studies localized degeneracy and criminality onto native-born blacks—

city dwellers as well as southern migrants. Ultimately, the rhetoric of criminality justified the exclusion of blacks from the rights and privileges of citizenship for generations after emancipation.

Muhammad draws from an exhaustive array of census data, government reports, organizational records, news accounts, and personal papers from scholars and activists such as James Stemons and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander. He builds his argument through an examination of the writing that followed the 1890 census including works by Frederick L. Hoffman, W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida B. Wells, Franz Boas, and Frances Kelly, to name a few. Hoffman's *Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro* (1896), Muhammad notes, "tied