

unwittingly raised as precedents for what had gone on in Germany. And in his final chapter, Lombardo details his meetings with Carrie Buck just before she died, the “rediscovery” of the case, its formal commemoration in 2002, and apologies that have

since been replicated elsewhere. This impeccable history tells an extraordinary story.

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A. Phillip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights

By Cornelius L. Bynum

(Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010. Pp. xix, 244. Notes, bibliography, index. \$75.00.)

As Cornelius L. Bynum indicates in his introduction, *A. Phillip Randolph and the Struggle for Civil Rights* is not a straightforward biography but an intellectual history drawing on biography for illumination. Bynum's mostly successful effort provides an account of Randolph's development that reflects his southern upbringing in and around Jacksonville, Florida, and the socially and politically rich world of Harlem from the late 1910s to the 1940s. As valuable for its nuanced description of Randolph's advocacy for African American rights and opportunities as for its illumination of his evolving thought, the work provides a sweeping record of Randolph's engagement with the social issues of the day.

Bynum's description of Randolph's childhood provides a colorful window into the life of young Asa, as he was known at the time. Thick factual descriptions of characters and events deftly convey the young Randolph's experiences growing up in North Florida in the early years of the

new century. Born to an itinerant African Methodist Episcopal (AME) pastor, Asa Phillip Randolph spent considerable time travelling with his father to churches and conferences. As a result, Randolph saw African Americans accomplish, through organization, substantial feats which would have been impossible individually. Meeting prominent African American leaders of the time, such as AME Bishop Henry McNeal Turner, deeply inspired and influenced Randolph. These experiences steeped him in the message of racial uplift that African Methodism emphasized.

Randolph's home life revolved around education and religion. His mother stressed personal self-respect and standing up for oneself and his father focused on racial pride and religious understanding. Reading served a critical role in Randolph's development. His parents maintained a small library of classical literature and encouraged both children's appetite for reading. Family discussions of the issues featured in the *Christian*

Recorder and the *AME Review*, two denominational periodicals, steeped Asa in thoughtful analysis and exploration of solutions to the challenges facing African Americans.

Arguably the center of African American intellectual life during the time, Harlem provided fertile ground for the adult Randolph as he became fully engaged with the political and social issues of the day. Bynum, drawing on the stories that Randolph published in his newspaper, *The Messenger*, maintains that Randolph's arrival in New York City triggered a new class consciousness that challenged, reformed, and ultimately refined his race consciousness. Here Bynum's narrative suffers from insufficient detail and description. Although we come to appreciate Randolph's engagement with other Harlem "radicals" on issues of race and class, the precise path of his intellectual development remains obscure. Nonetheless, the narrative illustrates Randolph's significant struggle with the limitations of class-based ideology in resolving the continued challenges facing African Americans.

Randolph encountered deep racial bias across class lines as he fought both the business establishment (for labor rights) and the labor establishment (for extension of those rights to African Americans). After a decade of fighting for recognition by the powerful Pullman Car Company and the white labor unions, Randolph's activism yielded significant results.

Recognition of the Pullman Porters by the company and unions represented a tremendous victory for Randolph and African Americans as a whole.

Although Bynum chronicles the arduous process by which Randolph achieved such goals, his narrative fails to add sufficient contour or texture to Randolph's persistence and endurance. The problem results from Bynum's omission of the personalities and daily interactions that sustained Randolph during this time. No further mention is made of Randolph's wife after their early marriage, of their personal financial status, or of Randolph's family in Florida. A clearer picture of Randolph's private life and challenges might have clarified the stages by which he developed his personal philosophy. This shortcoming diminishes what remains an illustrative and informative book. Reading it will provide a deep appreciation for Randolph's early intellectual formation and an understanding of his tremendous contribution to the African American struggle for both labor and civil rights.

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