

success by charging leaders with corruption, radicalism, and neglect of the farmers' true interests. Ironically, the recall, one of the tools of direct democracy, proved the NPL's undoing.

While the author mourns the short life of the NPL, he notes the importance of its legacies. The League developed a culture that launched the careers of progressive politicians, empowered women (albeit belatedly), built alliances between farmers and industrial workers, established the possibility of state-owned enterprises, modernized rural politics, and "articulated an agrarian moral economy that envisioned an alternative future for American capitalism" (p. 240). But, Lansing argues, the NPL was no forerunner of New Deal liberalism. Indeed, those who cut their political teeth in the NPL rejected the centralized,

technical, and bureaucratic power that characterized New Deal agricultural policies.

Insurgent Democracy upends much of the earlier scholarship as well as popular mythology of the NPL and offers a different, but no less important, story of a popular social movement tackling economic inequity. It leaves the reader wishing for more on the League's legacy in Canada and more comparative analysis of the conditions that led to the League's success. At the same time, I wondered if Lansing's praise for popular politics as an alternative to the norms of party politics and the limits it imposes has undergone any reconsideration.

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Faith in Black Power: Religion, Race, and Resistance in Cairo, Illinois

By Kerry Pimblott

(Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2017. Pp. x, 320. Illustrations, figures, table, notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00.)

Pimblott's smart, deeply researched, persuasive study of black Christianity and black power could not have arrived at a better time. This is a local study with regional and national implications. Pimblott offers broad insights into the histories of white supremacy and creative black resistance, economic justice, vigilantism, mass

incarceration, police violence, state repression of people of color, grassroots theologies, and more.

Pimblott challenges dominant "de-Christianization" narratives that characterize black power as antagonistic to black Christianity and largely disconnected from black liberation theologians like James Cone

and Albert Cleage (p. 4). As Cairo, Illinois, activists like Charles Koen engaged with black nationalist theologians, they “were able to develop a distinctive grassroots black theology that served to legitimate their turn from civil rights liberalism to black power nationalism” (p. 8). Koen’s Cairo United Front brought together local black churches, black theologians, and black and white religious organizations from across the nation to craft, support, and sustain the local black power movement.

Pimblott first surveys the idiosyncratic history of Cairo, which she analyzes as borderland between North and South, a city in the portion of southern Illinois poignantly known to its black inhabitants as Egypt. In the post-Civil War era, Cairo’s population closely mirrored the Mississippi Delta region from which its black residents fled. Illinois law—on paper—conflicted with the state’s Jim Crow order; in fact, the northern state’s violently repressive white racial regime echoed that of the Delta. The resulting absence of a substantial black middle class meant that black working-class churches—mostly Baptist—served as centers for political engagement and union organizing.

Local activists like Hattie Kendrick of Ward Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church won some significant victories in the 1930s and 1940s, including her successful 1945 suit to equalize teacher pay. But fierce repression followed. Several new voices, including Charles Koen and Blaine Ramsey, joined Kendrick in another stage of church-centered protest in

the early 1960s. They integrated the city’s restaurants, but met violent resistance when they turned to recreational facilities and worked to break whites’ hold on the levers of economic power, including city jobs, public housing, and social programs. In 1967, a black veteran in police custody died under suspicious circumstances, and fed-up black citizens took to the streets in a rebellion that targeted white-owned businesses and agents of economic inequity. Pimblott dates the transition of the Cairo movement from integrationist to nationalist to this rebellion, which finally forced white community leaders to the negotiation table.

This time, young people led the way, emphasizing racial solidarity and economic justice in the context of entrenched white supremacy. Many of the young leaders organized through Koen’s Illinois Migrant School; Koen also founded the Cairo United Front in 1968 after members of the White Hats murdered another black citizen. Black organizations across the city united around a new set of theologies and tactics, including a three-year economic boycott of white-owned businesses that refused to hire black workers. The Cairo United Front’s theology relied on the messages of the prophet Nehemiah to “legitimize a grassroots politics that blended black nationalist visions of nation building with a radical critique of capitalism” (p. 134).

If a new theology and shared cultural practices brought together the United Front, outside donors sustained it. In two remarkable chapters, Pimblott describes Koen’s success in raising

funds for black-led programming from the United Methodist Church, the National Council of Churches, and a number of other mainline outlets, whose contributions made the United Front's daily work possible and lent them the legitimacy and resources necessary to attract larger federal grants. Yet pushback from the membership of those churches and new forms of state repression made such funds short-lived, and by 1970, the United Front had reached its peak.

Pimblott's story ends in decline, and in the seemingly unjustified

imprisonment of many Cairo United Front leaders—including Koen, currently imprisoned again. Yet it is not an altogether bleak narrative, in its recounting of unlikely alliances and moments of unexpected victory. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in religion, race, politics, theology, and resistance.

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Cold War in a Cold Land: Fighting Communism on the Northern Plains

By David W. Mills

(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. Pp. ix, 300. Illustrations, maps, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

Many Americans who came of age during the Cold War might recall participating in preparedness drills at school. The image of schoolchildren “ducking and covering” under their desks illustrates American fears during the atomic age. But apparently, the people sheltering under a desk or in a backyard bunker were not living on the Northern Plains. In *Cold War in a Cold Land*, David W. Mills argues that residents of North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana did not live with the same anxieties as people in other regions of the country, believing either that an attack would never come, or, if it did, would not affect their area.

Mills's larger argument posits that the Cold War experience varied greatly by region: “While much of the nation expended time, energy, and financial resources to detect or oust Communist sympathizers, this phenomenon largely bypassed the [Plains] region, with a few noted exceptions” (p. 7). Mills takes the study of Cold War history to the state and regional level; as he notes, most historians have focused on national events. By narrowing the scope, Mills offers his readers a glimpse of the early Cold War era for the average American living on the Northern Plains. This book will likely not be useful for scholars focused on larger