

In the end, the vision of the frontier inhabitants prevailed: Indian peoples would gradually lose control of their lands to the new United States, a land-hungry nation that cared little for Indian sovereignty. British imperial designs also evaporated with the revolution, but not all was perfect in this new union. Indeed, frontier inhabitants maintained their suspicion of eastern elites, and enmities continued to build, periodically erupting to the surface as in the Whiskey Rebellion of 1794.

While only glancing on Indiana, Spero's book does provide an excellent analysis of the larger diplomatic issues at play in the Trans-Appalachian West. A concise, well-written, and highly readable work, it would serve well in a variety of history courses and is worth the attention of anyone interested in British colonial Indian policy and the causes of the American Revolution.

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Black Public History in Chicago: Civil Rights Activism from World War II into the Cold War

By Ian Rocksborough-Smith

(Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2018. Pp. 240. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth, \$99.00; paper, \$28.00.)

In *Black Public History in Chicago*, Ian Rocksborough-Smith compiles local examples of how black Chicagoans used the past to advance racial equality during the middle decades of the twentieth century. He begins with a valuable examination of Madeline Stratton Morris's campaign to incorporate black history into Chicago's public school curriculum, an effort with limited immediate impact but representing an important expansion of earlier mobilization around Negro History Week (the predecessor of Black History Month). Rocksborough-Smith then connects curriculum reform and leftist activism of the 1930s and 1940s

to examples of public history work that emerged during the Cold War climate of the 1950s and 1960s. Three of the book's five chapters situate the story of the DuSable Museum of African American History—a topic thoroughly discussed in a national context by Andrea A. Burns's *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* (2013)—in the local context of black activism in Chicago. Rocksborough-Smith convincingly demonstrates that Cold War political repression emboldened activists like Margaret Burroughs to continue leftist efforts through history work at the DuSable Museum. He also

highlights the anti-colonial and Black Power efforts of the Afro-American Heritage Association (AAHA), which used “history and heritage as an instrument for clear and effective action and struggle” during the 1950s and 1960s (p. 76).

Overall, Rocksborough-Smith tells a rich and complex story about black history work in Chicago. The book is the strongest when illuminating networks of individuals and organizations on Chicago’s South Side, as well as demonstrating the connectedness of history work with other cultural and political efforts in the city’s black communities. At the same time, Rocksborough-Smith teases out intergenerational, political, and geographical tensions within and among black activists in the city and nation. *Black Public History in Chicago* also consistently places women at the center of the story, even as it eschews meaningful gender analysis. Rocksborough-Smith makes good use of the Chicago Red Squad files to bolster his argument, but importantly balances surveillance documentation with autobiographical material that highlights the perspectives of key historical players.

Rocksborough-Smith’s use of “public history” as a central term throughout the book begs further interrogation. Certainly, public history

makes sense as an umbrella term to connect curriculum reform with the AAHA and the DuSable Museum, all of which are compelling examples of using black history in public settings. Public history also operates as a specific kind of activism that connects early leftist efforts with the Civil Rights and Black Power movements. On an individual level, however, it becomes clear that public history is an imposed category, with no indication that women like Madeline Stratton Morris or Margaret Burroughs identified as public historians or saw their history work as separate from civil rights activism, community organizing, or cultural production. What does it mean to adopt their work as a predecessor of what is now a growing field with increasingly defined methodology? Does it risk uncritical appropriation or aim to center black history work and its explicitly activist motivations within a broader historiography? Rocksborough-Smith certainly illuminates valuable examples of what we now call public history, but the author missed an opportunity to rethink the history of the field through the lens of local black history activism.

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