



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS



Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970 by John D'Emilio

Review by: Walter L. Williams

The American Historical Review, Vol. 88, No. 5 (Dec., 1983), pp. 1341-1342

Published by: [Oxford University Press](#) on behalf of the [American Historical Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1905026>

Accessed: 24/06/2014 22:09

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



Oxford University Press and American Historical Association are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The American Historical Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

"firsts," among them the opening in 1919 of the first municipally owned airport in the United States.

Perhaps the theme of Tucson's isolation is overplayed. Although the author handily sees the community through national ups and downs—"No city in the Nation handled the depression better" (p. 230)—there is little effort to link it to, or contrast it with, Albuquerque, El Paso, Phoenix, or Hermosillo to set it in the context of evolving regional geography as suggested by D. W. Meinig's *Southwest*.

At base *Tucson* is the book for those thousands of us who, aware of our curiosity or not, or afraid to ask, really do want to know who or what were Davis and Monthan.

JOHN L. KESSELL
University of New Mexico

MICHAEL J. MCDONALD and JOHN MULDOWNY. *TVA and the Dispossessed: The Resettlement of Population in the Norris Dam Area*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. 1982. Pp. xv, 334. \$28.50.

As originally conceived, the Tennessee Valley Authority was more than a means of developing hydroelectric power, flood control, and river navigation. It encompassed a desire to modernize rural life through social and economic planning. In *TVA and the Dispossessed* Michael J. McDonald and John Muldowny analyze TVA's impact on the people whose homes and farms were lost forever. Using Norris Dam and Reservoir in eastern Tennessee as a case study, they focus on the initial phases of TVA operations—land purchase, family relocation, and grave removal. The construction of Norris Dam, TVA's first major project, required the purchase of one hundred fifty-three thousand acres of land and the relocation of over three thousand families. Instead of modernizing rural life, McDonald and Muldowny find, TVA left the dispossessed families worse off than before.

To set the stage, the authors describe the Norris Basin using demographic data, TVA surveys, and their own interviews with displaced families. Most of the region's inhabitants were subsistence farmers, the land was depleted and eroded, and overpopulation stretched resources to the limit. But TVA's priorities were always reservoirs and watersheds, never the needs of the indigenous population. The dispossessed families were left to relocate themselves in the same region, proving that nothing was done to relieve the overpopulation problem. Rising land prices and lack of good land meant that most displaced landowners could afford less land and poorer land than they had previously owned. Even the new TVA town of Norris never materialized as a model of what planning could accomplish. The delicate task of grave removal, however, went

smoothly since TVA worked closely with religious leaders. Despite TVA, the Norris Dam region still has one of the lowest standards of living in Tennessee.

McDonald and Muldowny attribute the failure of TVA as a modernizing agency to the well-known conflicts among the members of the board of directors. Arthur E. Morgan possessed a grand, even utopian, vision of TVA's mission, while his codirectors, David Lilienthal and Harcourt A. Morgan, held a more limited conception of their social role. Besides philosophical differences, each board member headed separate areas of operation. Lilienthal purchased the land, H. A. Morgan relocated the population, and A. E. Morgan handled grave removal. Thus TVA lacked administrative coherence.

McDonald and Muldowny's work is a valuable addition to TVA literature. This book is the kind of study that must be done about the New Deal—sharply focused at the local level, with analysis of programmatic results. But should programmatic analysis stress the short run or the long run? Should TVA be judged in terms of its ideal or practical goals? McDonald and Muldowny stress short-term effects, and they ignore long-term benefits such as cheap electric power. They also judge TVA programs in terms of ideal goals, which can seldom be realized. The challenge for historians, however, is to balance TVA's short-term losses against its long-term gains, and to understand the internal and external forces that shaped its programs.

DONALD HOLLEY
*University of Arkansas,
Monticello*

JOHN D'EMILIO. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1983. Pp. x, 257. \$20.00.

Previously, most histories of homosexuality have focused on Europe, except for some valuable articles and documentaries by Jonathan Katz. Now John D'Emilio, in this revision of his Columbia dissertation, has contributed an important study of the origins of the gay liberation movement. He uses conventional sources, and also the private papers of, and interviews with, lesbian and gay activists.

From research by Allan Berube, D'Emilio sees World War II as the crucial factor in the emergence of a homosexual community. As millions were taken from their families by the armed forces and defense industry, to largely sex-segregated, non-familial environments overseas or in large port cities, many homosexually oriented individuals found others like

themselves and began to develop a community. At the end of the war many of them remained in these cities, especially New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The gay bar became the center of this developing urban subculture.

With McCarthyism, this emerging subculture was equated with communism as a danger to society, and employment was denied to thousands. Congress, the Eisenhower administration, the FBI, and the Post Office spent huge amounts of money investigating homosexuals and informing employers. Police directed brutal crackdowns on gay meeting places.

The aggressiveness of this discrimination promoted a backlash among gays, resulting in the 1951 founding of the Mattachine Society in Los Angeles. Founders wanted to mobilize a large constituency to combat discrimination and build self-pride. By 1953 Mattachine had two thousand members and began publishing a national gay rights magazine. But the leftist background of the leaders led to controversy, and more cautious leaders took over. The movement remained timid, small, and factionalized.

During the 1960s, however, both the sexual revolution and the civil rights movement had a profound impact on younger gay activists, who began picketing the government and the psychiatric establishment. San Francisco in particular became a center for gay protests. Black power and the counterculture, expressing pride in their differences, became models for radicalized young gays. In New York in 1969, after a police raid on the Stonewall bar, the arrested patrons began a riot that led to three days of street fighting between police and gays. The Gay Liberation Front was formed, and quickly spread to other cities.

Like the woman's movement, gay liberation continued in the 1970s, sharing ideology and the active involvement of lesbian feminists. Mass confrontation and public "coming out" of gay individuals broke the barrier of gays' fear of exposure, which set the stage for further gains.

D'Emilio presents a perceptive understanding of his subject, and writes about it clearly and well. But the book is almost too compactly written. More quotation from the activists themselves (especially Dorr Legg, Henry Hay, Del Martin, and Jim Kepner) would have made them come alive personally. Inclusion of photographs would also have aided readers in personalizing the people. Most surprising is the lack of a bibliography, though complete footnotes are included. The book is a treasure for gay activists, but it is also valuable as a case study in social change. Scholars cannot ignore the important impact of this minority movement in changing recent American social attitudes.

WALTER L. WILLIAMS
University of Cincinnati

MARY FRANCES BERRY and JOHN W. BLASSINGAME.
Long Memory: The Black Experience in America. New York: Oxford University Press. 1982. Pp. xxi, 486. \$19.95.

American historians will be familiar with much of the information in *Long Memory*, but even specialists in black studies will be intrigued by the interpretations and synthesis offered by two of the most prominent of the younger black scholars who matured during the era of civil rights militancy.

Above all *Long Memory* is a detailed and generally accurate account of black resistance to racial oppression. There are occasional lapses into unfair misrepresentation, however. Research on the effects of ability grouping is inconclusive, but Mary Frances Berry and John W. Blassingame confidently inform their readers that "Black students suffered greatly from the 'tracking' system introduced in many school districts in the 1950s" (p. 282). The Coleman Report of 1966 indicated that there was substantial equality in measurable resources at majority-black and majority-white schools, but Berry and Blassingame state that "Once a school became more than 50 percent black, it was ignored by public officials" (p. 283). Their discussion of contraception and abortion is another example of one-sided exaggeration. Family planning clinics are disproportionately located in neighborhoods with heavy black population, the authors assert, and are part of a government-financed campaign "to eliminate black Americans" (p. 352).

Knowledge of American race relations has reached the point where it is possible to offer a balanced assessment of blacks and whites. In *Long Memory*, however, the focus is almost exclusively on white oppression and heroic black resistance, with little attention given to the tangle of social ills that have impeded black progress. The authors take pains to establish the persistence of African survivals and adaptations that helped blacks endure, but they generally ignore evidence that slavery and discrimination played havoc with the character of many blacks and the institutions of the black community. The "lower-class matriarchal family" is presented as "an example of the remarkable adaptation black institutions have made to oppressive conditions in America" (p. 84). The disproportionate incidence of crime among blacks is depicted as retaliation against an unjust socioeconomic system. The prison system is characterized as an "American Archipelago" (p. 257).

Unlike older surveys such as *From Slavery to Freedom* by John Hope Franklin and *From Plantation to Ghetto* by August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *Long Memory* does not tell a story of change over time. Readers are left with the impression of unavailing black protest against persistent and undiminished