

Making Black History: The Color Line, Culture, and Race in the Age of Jim Crow. By Jeffrey Aaron Snyder. (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2018. xiv, 243 pp. Cloth, \$86.95. Paper, \$26.95.)

In *Making Black History* Jeffrey Aaron Snyder presents a clearly written and carefully researched intellectual biography of Carter G. Woodson, the acknowledged “father of black history” (p. 36). Snyder delineates how Woodson, in essence, invented the discipline of African American history—establishing the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History), founding the *Journal of Negro History*, publishing deeply influential monographs and textbooks, and originating Negro History Week—convinced that the “proper” study of African American history would both galvanize racial solidarity and crucially undermine the scientifically and intellectually sanctioned antiblack racism that pervaded the United States. As Woodson dramatically put it, “there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom” (p. 6).

Divided into three simultaneously thematic and chronological sections—“The Color Line, 1915–1926”; “Culture, 1922–1941”; and “Race, 1942–1956”—*Making Black History* traces Woodson’s vision for African American history, showing how a distinct African American history responded to Jim Crow apartheid, was central to the Negro/Harlem Renaissance, and contributed to a scholarly rejection not simply of racism but of the concept of race itself. By the end of his book, Snyder has convincingly located Woodson’s scholarly project at the heart of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and the modern civil rights movement. In each of these sections, Snyder neatly contextualizes Woodson’s work, setting it against mainstream culture and scholarship as well as within African American intellectual history.

Making Black History is a worthy addition to scholarship on the construction of African American identity and on how interpretations of the past function in the political and cultural debates of the present. Indeed, it attends to the crucial issues driving such scholarship, regularly returning to the questions, “Who and what is ‘Negro?’” and “What are the pur-

poses of history?” But, in his effort to celebrate the significance of Woodson, Snyder at times avoids a careful examination of how exactly Woodson addressed (or failed to address) such questions. For example, although Snyder acknowledges the “myth” of historical objectivity, he never really interrogates Woodson’s deep faith in the distinction between propaganda and factual history. Similarly, Snyder moves a bit too quickly from the “sizeable problem” of determining “Who and what is ‘Negro?’” to more manageable questions about the scientific legitimacy of racism (p. 134). It would be very interesting to more fully explore how Woodson reconciled his efforts to “awaken” African Americans as “a people” with contemporaneous debates over the concept of race, rather than simply describe Woodson as “forging ahead in spite of the ambiguity surrounding the definition of ‘Negro?’” (pp. 71, 137). In what sense, one might ask: Did Woodson make not only black history but also the identity category black itself?

Making Black History will be of interest to scholars in many disciplines (history, literary studies, education) and promises to provoke more work on a towering figure in U.S. history whose contributions have for too long been underappreciated.

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Red Hot Mama: The Life of Sophie Tucker. By Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018. 276 pp. \$27.95.)

In recent decades, feminist scholars have routinely rehabilitated notorious women of the past as protofeminist figures, with Jennifer Scanlon’s *Bad Girls Go Everywhere: The Life of Helen Gurley Brown, the Woman behind Cosmopolitan Magazine* (2009) a notable example. In *Red Hot Mama* Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff argues that Sophie Tucker, née Sofya Kalish, a popular American singer in the first half of the twentieth century who was celebrated for her sexual innuendo and ribald humor (earning her the sobriquet Red Hot Mama),