concerns over commodities. By contrast, in the Delta, which was so closely tied to cotton production, Populism had little impact because blacks, the overwhelming number of potential adherents to the new party, had already been disenfranchised by the time the third party emerged. Hence, only the Georgia Piedmont offered the necessary mix of commodity production and a substantial enough share of the black population enfranchised that, when combined with disaffected white voters, permitted Populists to challenge the two-party system.

In part two, Harris demonstrates that beyond its effect on African-American labor markets, World War I "added an entirely new dimension to societies in the Deep South" as it "brought a nationalization of policy, power, and sentiment unknown in the South since Reconstruction and reinforced in many ways the dynamic forces at work in town and countryside" (pp. 222–23). No white southerner spoke more directly to this concern than Mississippi’s Senator James K. Vardaman, who warned about what "might arise from what he called the 'melting pot of war'" (p. 223).

Part three’s coverage of the period between the two world wars highlights the divisions that developed among whites during the 1920s, especially the "conflict between modern and traditional values" as southerners adjusted to a new world of cars, radios, and movies. As he does so skillfully throughout the book, Harris best makes the case for the growing discord by narrating a story, in this case the 1919 lynching of a black man, Lloyd Clay, in Vicksburg, Mississippi. Harris emphasizes how this lynching "exposed deep social and cultural cleavages among whites" (p. 265). Within days of the murder, in which women as well as men shot guns at the body and in the process even killed a white bystander, "prominent business and professional leaders" (p. 267), who sought to repair the town’s image, distributed a petition denouncing the mob.

Beyond the valuable insights it draws, readers will appreciate three other aspects of this book. One, Harris’s superb synthesis of the vast scholarship on this era is matched by his identifying previously untapped archival sources that offer fresh perspectives and evidence. Particularly noteworthy is his reliance on the Delta and Pine Land Company records to trace how this corporation adjusted to that region’s shifting economy. Two, at key points in his analysis Harris’s fascinating stories amplify significant issues. Three, placement of the book’s nineteen charts and twenty-five tables in an appendix complements rather than hinders the book’s literary presentation.

ROBERT C. KENZER
University of Richmond


Brooklyn, Illinois, has a special place in African-American history. Founded within a stone’s throw of East St. Louis in 1829 by free blacks and fugitive slaves, this small enclave evolved first into an unincorporated, biracial village and then, later, into a small, working-class, all-black commuter suburb. Along the way, Brooklyn became the first black-majority municipality in the United States (1873), thus allowing it to stake its claim as America’s oldest black town. Confronted with chronic underdevelopment, it also devolved into a run down, problem-plagued community in the decades immediately surrounding 1900—a small-town forerunner to larger cities like Gary and Newark in more recent times.

Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua’s history of Brooklyn, told from an avowedly black nationalist perspective, emphasizes the importance of race, class, proletarianization, and dependency. The story itself is broken down into three parts, with each corresponding to a broad stage in the community’s evolution: its formative years before the Civil War; its transition to a village dominated politically by African Americans (1870–1906); and its subsequent political and economic decline (1886–1915).

As Cha-Jua explains, Brooklyn developed initially in much the same fashion as scores of other antebellum northern “freedom villages” (black rural communities). Its founders came from a variety of backgrounds, both free and slave. They built a cohesive sense of community through close residence to, and dependence upon, one another and suffered under the weight of the disabilities imposed by Illinois’s Black Laws. Economically, early Afro-Brooklynites fared somewhat better than free blacks in northern urban settings—most householders, for example, owned their own homes—but nonetheless were at a disadvantage relative to surrounding white neighbors. Perhaps the young village’s most distinctive characteristic was its biracial character. The village proper was first platted by white abolitionists in 1837, and a large minority of its early residents were Euro-Americans (120 of 300 residents in 1850).

After the Civil War, Brooklyn came into its own as an all-black town. The village’s African-American population increased steadily, largely due to an influx of adult freedmen from the South, while the white population’s growth first slowed and then reversed itself. By 1910, 1,400 of Brooklyn’s 1,600 residents shared African descent. Equally if not more important, Afro-Brooklynites gained political rights and, by the mid-1870s, began to shift local government into their own hands. The election of John Evans as the town’s first African-American mayor in 1886 marked the culmination of this transition. Under Evans’s skillful leadership, the town of Brooklyn made a number of modest but progressive strides in the late 1880s and early 1890s, successfully lobbying for a post office, installing electrical street lights, and improving other aspects of its infrastructure.

Ultimately Brooklyn’s proximity to East St. Louis and its limited economic base undermined the town’s promise. Local industrialists bypassed the town in their
expansion into the eastern St. Louis metropolitan area after 1870, thereby undermining attempts at self-development by Brooklyn's political leaders. The town increasingly became home to a disproportionately male proletariat, which in turn recast the town's character. Faced with limited economic prospects, Brooklyn became "an outlet for the overflow of taverns, gambling [and] prostitution . . . from East St. Louis" (p. 214). Local politicians found themselves drawn into a morass of graft and corruption. The enlightened leadership of John Evans soon gave way to a series of scandal-ridden, controversial administrations and, in 1915, to a tragic gunfight between rival political factions. Brooklyn survived, but without the promise and hopefulness of its first half century.

Throughout the narrative Cha-Jua draws careful, well-reasoned comparisons between Brooklyn and other all-black and black majority communities, from western towns such as Nicodemus to contemporary cities like Gary. He also strengthens his analysis by placing Brooklyn's experience in the context of theoretical work on black nationalism, anticolonial revolutions, economic dependency, and proletarianization. While often apt and insightful, especially as it relates to the latter two concepts, the emphasis on theory sometimes has its limitations. More than a few readers, to provide a notable example, will question the validity of the author's depiction of Afro-Brooklynites' rise to political power as akin to an anticolonial struggle. Such hyperbole notwithstanding, the cumulative effect of Cha-Jua's efforts to broaden and deepen Brooklyn's story is quite impressive. This book offers a thoughtful, engaging account that adds to our growing understanding of the diversity of African-American life beyond the mainstream.

Stephen A. Vincent
University of Wisconsin, Whitewater


Studies abound documenting the history of relations between whites and blacks in the late nineteenth century. Scholars have also published many works dealing with the federal government's policy of settling Indians on reservations in the late 1800s. Murray R. Wickett has produced a pioneering study that seeks to understand the relations of whites, Native Americans, and African Americans in Indian and Oklahoma Territories from the end of the Civil War to Oklahoma statehood in 1907. Although this work is intriguing, informative, and well written, it falls somewhat short of achieving Wickett's goal of understanding the interrelationships of the three groups, because the author, in most of the chapters, discusses each group separately with little interplay between them. The book does succeed, however, in demonstrating the irony of the situation in which government officials strove to assimilate the Indians and inculcate them with "white" ideals and values while at the same time working to segregate blacks and deny them entrance into the American political system.

African Americans were in the Indian Territory at the end of the Civil War because members of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles) held slaves who became freedmen after Appomattox. In a very interesting chapter, the author relates how the Creeks and Seminoles quickly adopted the freedmen into their respective tribes and gave them equal rights and full citizenship. The Cherokees and Choctaws, however, only reluctantly afforded these rights to their freedmen, while the Chickasaws never did agree to adopt their ex-slaves. This chapter is marred by the lack of population figures; the author never states the percentage of freedmen within each tribe or what percentage of Indians actually held slaves. Therefore, the reader is left unsure as to what degree of importance this issue held among the Five Civilized Tribes in the late 1800s.

In succeeding chapters, Wickett discusses racial prejudice and stereotypes, the gradual erosion of Indian lands, education, labor, the imposition of the American legal system, and politics. The author finds that most Native Americans in the Indian Territory shared the same prejudices against blacks that whites had and tried to deny the rights of the freedmen in manners similar to those used in other parts of the South. Ironically, the federal government sided with the ex-slaves, who claimed that their tribal citizenship entitled them to individual land allotments under the Dawes Act. Therefore, unlike their fellow freedmen in the South, ex-slaves in the Indian Territory did receive their "forty acres and a mule." In other areas, the freedmen of the Five Civilized Tribes were not so lucky. While government programs offered ample opportunities for the Indians in Oklahoma—including recently removed Plains tribesmen—to receive education, blacks were forced to create their own schools. Whereas government officials sought to create a class of independent yeoman farmers among the Indians, the freedmen were expected to provide a pool of cheap labor upon which white and Indian landowners could draw. This plan backfired as few of the relocated Plains tribesmen became agriculturalists, while nearly three-fourths of the blacks in Oklahoma engaged in farming their own land by 1907.

After the Civil War, the federal government imposed the American judicial system upon the Indians, most of whom reluctantly came to accept it. By contrast, U.S. officials denied African Americans protection from Indian courts, which they claimed did not afford them equal protection. Blacks were also denied inclusion into the American justice system so as to avoid the terror of lynchings and vigilante justice following the opening up of the territory to white settlers in 1890. Finally, Native American leaders denied their ex-slaves the right to vote and hold office.