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The Color of Work: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Southern Paper Industry, 1945-1980

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perceive unions as less attractive in regions with recent influxes of immigrants, and to be less susceptible to organization in those regions. Briggs could also make much more of the comparison between 1890–1920 and 1965–2000; both periods feature large-scale immigration and subsequent increases in the foreign-born population, yet the first sees unionization increase fivefold by 1920, while the second sees unionization fall by more than half. Is the pattern in these two eras due to a causal relationship between immigration and unionization, changes in the demand for labor in industries with strong worker demand for organized labor, or some combination of the two? Briggs's story would have been more convincing if the historical narrative had been used to distinguish the impact of immigration from alternative explanations for changing patterns in unionization over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

While its principal thesis might have benefited from more careful evaluation, *Immigration and American Unionism* does offer a lucid summary of the histories of American immigration and the American labor movement, and of organized labor's attitudes toward immigration in the United States. The accessibility of this volume makes it an attractive option for readers keen to explore those subjects.

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The Color of Work: The Struggle for Civil Rights in the Southern Paper Industry, 1945–1980. By Timothy J. Minchin. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001. 296 pp. ISBN 0-8078-2618-9, $55.00 (cloth); 0-8078-4933-2, $24.95 (paper).

Timothy J. Minchin writes books faster than I can read them. This remarkably efficient and productive British historian has written four books in southern labor history since 1997. Indeed, his fourth book, *Forging a Common Bond* (University Press of Florida, 2003), has been published even before reviews of this, his third book, have appeared. All of these books are characterized by an original and important research question, an appropriately light interpretive touch, and thorough research in new sources.

The Color of Work describes how black workers overcame employment discrimination in the southern paper industry. Prior to passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, blacks were restricted to the lowest-paying and most menial, dangerous, and physically demanding jobs in the industry. They were locked into limited lines of progression and could not bid for the better jobs that were reserved for whites. Worse, segregated local unions that had jurisdiction over different jobs institutionalized segregated job ladders in the mill.

Black locals were not resigned to the situation, and they protested discriminatory practices that limited their members to the worst jobs. But they had little bargaining power, as whites comprised a majority of the work force and were intent on defending their racial privileges. Employers shared the same racist values as white workers and were their willing accomplices in drawing the color line at work.

Change, however, finally occurred when blacks sued both the unions and employers for violating Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited employment discrimination. The federal government proceeded to put teeth into the new law by threatening to pull government contracts from paper mills that continued to discriminate. Southern paper mills that feared a loss of revenue and southern paper unions that feared a loss of jobs reluctantly complied. Plant-wide seniority would now replace department-wide seniority in determining promotions, permitting blacks to bid for jobs from which they had previously been excluded.

Minchin's evidence is rich and deep. It emerges from the testimony black workers gave in Title VII class-action suits that were filed against virtually every paper mill in the South, and from subsequent interviews with many of the plaintiffs. Many of the black workers recall spending their work lives mired in the same bad job they took when they first entered the mill, while they watched white workers who were hired after them get promoted to better jobs. They describe mills that had not only segregated job ladders but also segregated locker rooms, water fountains, cafeterias, entranceways, and pay windows. They talk of how their disenchantment with segregation was encouraged by their military service, which exposed them to areas of the country that were not segregated, trained them in skills that segregated job ladders prevented them from performing, and created a sense of injustice when they were discriminated against after sacrificing for their country. They tell of the lengths white workers

would go to in defense of their racial privileges—harassing blacks who had the temerity to enter "white" jobs, boycotting integrated workplace facilities, and closing employee clubs rather than see them integrated. Finally, they say that although Title VII may have given them the legal right to better jobs, making that right effective required courage, patience, and the strong arm of the federal government.

The book contains many valuable small nuggets. Minchin presents evidence to show that many of the national chains with nonsouthern leadership, such as International Paper and the Scott Paper Company, integrated job lines faster than smaller, local firms. In addition, both white locals and paper companies commonly blamed the federal government for the desegregation of job ladders in order to divert resentment from themselves. This fed into the larger antagonism of southern whites toward the federal government that gave rise to the Republican realignment of the South.

Minchin also examines what he calls the generational debts and credits that the desegregation of job ladders created among both blacks and whites. Whites who now had to wait while blacks with more plant-wide seniority were promoted over them perceived themselves as paying for the sins of their fathers. They did not receive the tainted benefits of segregation that were collected by previous generations, but perceived themselves as being punished for them nonetheless. Blacks, too, had their own "lost" generation. Many blacks who had spent their working lives in the same job were unwilling to leave it, even as "white" jobs opened up. Many preferred to stay in their comfort zone and not suffer harassment by whites or the embarrassment of failing at a more demanding job. But even if they could not reach the Promised Land themselves, black plaintiffs were gratified that their efforts made it possible for the next generation to do so.

The Color of Work never loses its focus on the southern paper mill, which is both a strength and a limitation. The federal government's determination to desegregate the industry was decisive, but Minchin never investigates the politics of the regulatory agencies, which stretch over both Democratic and Republican administrations, that were responsible for breaking the color line at work. This, however, is a mere quibble. Minchin's book invites other historians to follow his footsteps by tracing the desegregation of other southern industries. *The Color of Work* will set a high standard to meet when they do so.

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The Devil in Silicon Valley: Northern California, Race, and Mexican-Americans. By Stephen J. Pitti. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003. 288 pp. ISBN 0-691-09287-7, $29.95 (cloth).

A city of "marvelous ethnic diversity," crows the official website of San José, California. Anyone who reads Stephen Pitti's sweeping history of the Santa Clara Valley and its ethnic Mexican population will find that such a gushing claim brings on nausea rather than euphoria. Celebrations of diversity appear as just the latest in a long tradition of misleading promotional strategies that whitewash a past (and present) of racial discrimination and silence the contributions of ethnic Mexicans to the Valley's continuing prosperity. In a narrative informed by a rich array of sources and a strong sense of indignation, Pitti trenchantly and meticulously exposes the underbelly of the Valley's bloated boosterism.

This book is not just an exposé, however. Covering more than two centuries, Pitti tracks the changing ways in which ethnic Mexicans came to both see and organize themselves in the Valley. But it is a single and powerful thread of continuity that binds the text: the way political, social, and economic opportunities in Santa Clara Valley have been constantly determined by race—the "Devil in Silicon Valley," as Pitti puts it. The aptness of that metaphor is plain from the first pages of the story, describing the actions of Spanish missionaries on the late-eighteenth-century Spanish frontier. Countering Valley boosters' romantic idealization of the colonial past, Pitti vividly describes missionaries' brutality toward their indigenous charges, as well as their insidious ideas about race, dating from the 1780s, which were to shape the changing frontier for generations to come. In the chapters that follow, Pitti tracks successive waves of U.S. settlers, officials, and industrialists and the concomitant economic transformations in the Valley, from the Gold Rush to the Silicon high. These transformations, he convincingly shows, rarely meant changes in access