

In the framing of an American political order, Black and white men and women had radically different assumptions. In recovering and interrogating those assumptions, Jemison reminds the reader that the work of silencing was not entirely successful.

James Garfield, Racial Justice, and Republican Party Politics

Arrington, Benjamin T. *The Last Lincoln Republican: The Presidential Election of 1880*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2020. 232 pp. \$39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0700629824.

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Benjamin T. Arrington's *The Last Lincoln Republican: The Presidential Election of 1880* offers an intriguing study of race and politics in the United States through an analysis of James A. Garfield and the 1880 presidential election. Arrington argues that "Garfield was the last true 'Lincoln Republican' to occupy the White House." Garfield, he writes, "represented the Republican Party's origins as a party dedicated to equal opportunities for all Americans" (4). The book, an engaging 186 pages, begins with an overview of the 1876 presidential election. It then offers a biographical look at Garfield, including two chapters on the 1880 Republican National Convention, and looks at the Democratic National Convention and that year's third-party candidates. The book closes with chapters on the 1880 election and Garfield's short-lived presidency. Arrington concludes that, when Garfield was assassinated in 1881, Lincoln's brand of equality-minded Republicanism was extinguished. "That vision," Arrington contends, "to some extent, died with him" (4).

Arrington's spotlight is on Garfield. His chief opponent in the 1880 election—the former U.S. general Winfield Scott Hancock—and the Democratic Party more generally play relatively minor roles in Arrington's narrative. While such a focus should, given the author's expertise, hardly come as a surprise, Arrington justifies his focus: Garfield was a more interesting and important political figure than Hancock. To make his argument, Arrington emphasizes Garfield's support for racial justice. The book addresses many issues that were central to U.S. politics in the 1876 and 1880 elections—such as civil service reform or monetary policy—but its true focus is clear. With an abundant use of Garfield's diary, Arrington convincingly proves that Garfield carried forward the Republican Party's founding commitment to racial justice into his presidency. Arrington's second chapter, for instance, demonstrates that opposition to slavery drew Garfield into politics in the 1850s and that the Ohioan remained an advocate of the rights of Black Americans as a U.S. congressman during and after the Civil War. The final two chapters

show how Garfield pushed for the renewed enforcement of the Reconstruction Amendments during the 1880 election and into his brief presidency. Arrington's tracing of racial justice through Garfield's political career is masterful.

Arrington adds to important scholarly trends in late nineteenth-century scholarship. Traditional periodization attributes the end of Reconstruction to 1877 and downplays the continuing struggle for racial justice during the Gilded Age. While scholars have spent decades calling for a revised periodization, the trend has intensified recently. Advancing the early work of Vincent De Santis and Stanley Hirshson, scholars such as Xi Wang and Charles Calhoun have shown how racial justice remained a part of Republican Party politics into the twentieth century.¹ *The Last Lincoln Republican* further pushes this trend along by effectively emphasizing the importance of racial justice to Garfield's politics.

Arrington's hook—that Garfield was the “last Lincoln Republican” to occupy the White House—is, while compelling, less concretely shown. First, despite Arrington's demonstration that racial justice remained a theme throughout Garfield's political career, this reviewer questions whether that issue was as central to Garfield's politics—or to the 1880 presidential election—as it is to this book. Second, several policies that Garfield embraced and advocated during his campaign and presidency raise questions about the extent to which he was truly “dedicated to equal opportunities for all Americans.” Garfield's support for restricting immigration from China, for instance, seems to challenge the veracity of that assessment. Third, some future Republican presidents—Benjamin Harrison and Dwight Eisenhower, for example—continued to push for some form of racial justice in the South long after Garfield's death. Arrington might contend that Garfield's intentions were purer and that his successors' motives were more politically motivated, but the point remains ambiguous. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, Arrington's argument that “Garfield was the last true ‘Lincoln Republican’ to occupy the White House” because of his commitment to racial justice for the South oversimplifies the ideological origins of the Republican Party by narrowing it to only one thread—albeit an important one—of the party's original ideology.

Arrington's conclusion that Garfield, had he survived, might have arrested the development of white supremacy in the South raises an interesting debate. Garfield committed himself to doing so in his inaugural address, but he would have faced significant challenges. Were the circumstances all that different in 1880 than they had been over the previous years, or as they would be ten years later when Republicans passed the Federal Elections Bill? The party might have benefited from Garfield's stronger executive leadership, but Republicans were divided over the issue of renewed enforcement in 1880 no less than they would be in later years.

The Last Lincoln Republican presents Garfield's life and political career in a readable and compelling fashion that has the potential to draw as much interest outside of academia as it does inside. But was Garfield the “last Lincoln Republican” in the White House? Maybe in some ways. Had he lived, would the federal government have confronted racial injustice in the South? Perhaps. But is *The Last Lincoln Republican* an important contribution to our understanding of politics and race in late nineteenth-century America? In this reviewer's assessment, absolutely.

¹ Vincent P. De Santis, *Republicans Face the Southern Question—The New Departure Years, 1877–1897* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959); Stanley P. Hirshson, *Farewell to the Bloody Shirt: Northern Republicans and the Southern Negro, 1877–1893* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1962); Xi Wang, *The Trial of Democracy: Black Suffrage and Northern Republicans, 1860–1910* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1997); and Charles W. Calhoun, *Conceiving a New Republic: The Republican Party and the Southern Question, 1869–1900* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006).