

Note

1 Stephen W. Haycox, *Frigid Embrace: Politics, Economics, and Environment in Alaska* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002). William R. Hunt, *North of 53°: The Wild Days of the Alaska-Yukon Mining Frontier, 1870–1914* (New York: Macmillan, 1974).

Racism and Ruptured Solidarity

Postel, Charles. *Equality: An American Dilemma, 1866–1896*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019. 390 pp. \$30.00 (hardcover), ISBN 9780809079636.

Ian Tyrrell

University of New South Wales, Sydney, AUS

doi:10.1017/S1537781420000195

Individual liberty has been privileged in the American exceptionalist narrative at the expense of equality and fraternity, states Charles Postel. The collective tinge of fraternity has attracted more Americans than commonly believed, but it is to equality that radical dreamers have looked for transforming the United States. Postel contradicts the idea that Americans after the Civil War “spurned egalitarian and collective ideals” (3–4). The postwar record saw many groups seeking equality, but it is Postel’s contention that the equality sought by farmers, laborers, unionist, and women was flawed. “Equality and solidarity ...were fractured and contradictory. Too often, divergent notions of equality clashed with one another; too often, fraternity and solidarity rested on division and exclusion” (4).

Postel develops his arguments by showing just how important equality was to three key organizations and others either affiliated with or influenced by them. The three were the National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry founded in 1867, which wished to rationalize and improve the lot of farmers; the Knights of Labor (1869); and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (1874), which embraced much more than temperance reform under its charismatic leader, Frances Willard, from 1879 to 1898. Also discussed are the interactions of these movements. From the National Labor Union founded in 1865 came portents of later struggles over equality within the Knights. NLU supporters joined in the Greenback Party, with which the chief figure in the Knights of Labor during the 1880s, Terence Powderly, was involved. The WCTU and the Knights also interacted through the friendship between Powderly and Willard. Being first, the Grange provided organizational models for the other two. All gave an important place to women in their rhetoric, but only the WCTU was devoted primarily to woman. Each pursued a hierarchical structure.

According to Postel, a new quest for equality was set in motion by the disruptive events of the Civil War, and the war helped to inspire the national focus of new social movements. All, especially the Grange, recognized the importance of governmental structures and, for the Knights, a “collective citizenry” in the form of local, state, and federal governments (215).

Nationalism is an important theme in the book that fits Theda Skocpol's idea that the consolidation of the state as a result of the Civil War encouraged reformers to seek national as well as state power. Contrary to the belief that social movements were grassroots in origins, Postel argues, the Grange movement was spurred by Washington officials to create a national reform strategy for agriculture. The Grange embraced the "rationalist, nationalist and egalitarian ethos of the post-Civil War moment," with each state affiliate having equal rights within the National Grange (32).

In all three groups, race, above all, fractured the reformers' unity. Conflicting internal objectives contributed, but also pressures from the larger society. Evidence piled up that equality did not command majority support if extended to non-whites. The Grange flourished in the early 1870s but, Postel shows, put white farmers and planters in the South ahead of racial justice. Most interesting is Postel's contention that the Grange's view of "sectional reconciliation" (108) had a hand in the end of Reconstruction in 1876–77. Postel recognizes that "no single explanation" for the national political retreat from Reconstruction will do, but stresses the Grange's role as a political lobby "adopting a vision of national unification based on subordinating the equal rights of the former slaves" (105).

The WCTU was also fractured by race. Willard embarked in the 1880s on a Southern strategy to build WCTU national membership, and "Colored" women's temperance affiliates were organized. But her reputation as a humanitarian and liberal reformer received a large setback when she was criticized for failing to condemn lynching strongly enough. The story of Ida Wells's campaign against Willard in 1893–94 has been well told before, and is here too. Wells's allegations that intercourse between white Southern women and black men included consensual sex threatened to "blow up" Willard's "political project," Postel argues (300). Her reaction was based on a vision of political power through the alliance she crafted with "prominent women of the former Confederacy, in the name of 'home protection.'" But Postel shows that the WCTU promise of racial inclusion and equality "had been a limited, conditional half of a promise" in the first place (300). Willard's humanitarian intentions toward the poor and non-white of the world were noble enough, but hierarchical, as she came to treat both Indians and African Americans (as well as the WCTU's foreign missionary converts) as "dependent" peoples.

My criticism concerns the integration of the national and events beyond the nation. Postel notes that the "Grangers had always recognized the international dimensions of their project" (59); they embraced the British cooperative system, and, though plans to build Granges in Europe "went nowhere" (60), the Grange succeeded in Canada. The WCTU's international interest is discussed, though the extensive extra-American history of the Knights is not. The question that arises is how to factor this persistent internationalism into the tendency to see the national level as the pinnacle of achievement. In the case of the WCTU, the role of religion and its missionary urges helps understand global aspirations, but the internationalism in the other cases appears to be different—unless one considers how global trade, credit, and labor markets profoundly affected the American polity and society. There are hints of global forces in the book, but their disruptive significance was more far-reaching than indicated.

Increasingly "untethered from the struggle against slavery and racial oppression" (9), and with equality becoming a "catchall of sentiments," egalitarian and collectivist movements "faced an impasse," Postel concludes (311). With each of the organizations complicit in white supremacy, Postel supplies an impassioned critique of Gilded Age failure to fulfill the goal of equality. Writing clearly and effectively, he knows how to tell a story and weave little-known but interesting details into an arresting narrative. His work will be compared

with Richard White's *The Republic for Which It Stands*, which covers similar territory at epic length. Both greatly add to the study of Reconstruction and the Gilded Age.¹

Note

¹ Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865–1896*, Oxford History of the United States (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Forming and Reforming San Diego's Childcare Regime

Ciani, Kyle E. *Choosing to Care: A Century of Childcare and Social Reform in San Diego, 1850–1950*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2019. 348 pp. (cloth), ISBN 9781496214591.

Orion A. Teal

El Camino College, Torrance, California, USA

doi:10.1017/S1537781420000201

“The history of childcare shines a light on the people of San Diego who chose to care about the health and well-being of strangers, and the parents who chose to trust that care” (xxviii). This statement at the end of Kyle Ciani's introduction to *Choosing to Care* suggests her resolutely sunny view of childcare reform efforts during San Diego's first century of Anglo-American settlement and raises thorny questions of agency that often arise in studies of reform efforts directed at vulnerable populations, particularly children. Ciani tends to see interactions between empathetic reformers, parents, and children as mutually beneficial, even while simultaneously showing how childcare efforts were rooted in power relations shaped by prevailing ideas of class, race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. As Ciani explains candidly when discussing the rise of the city's day nurseries, “finding the balance between assisting and controlling families would be a constant struggle for childcare advocates” (126).

Ciani explores the conflicted nature of childcare reform in San Diego from the community's beginnings as a military outpost and ranching area in the decades following California statehood to its rapid suburbanization in the wake of World War II mobilization. She does this rather deftly, making the various childcare scenarios come to life through rich contextualization and creative speculation to fill the silences found in institutional sources, even if this same innovative approach heightens questions about ascribing agency to the “voiceless.” Her central intervention is an expansive definition of “childcare” that encompasses familiar efforts, such as orphanages and social settlement programs, as well as developments that historians may be loath to see as “care,” including the juvenile justice system and vocational education programs aimed at shaping the future workforce. *Choosing to Care* is structured both