

Yet, because these women's activities were largely outside the bounds of the administrative body overseeing the canal's construction—the Isthmian Canal Commission (ICC)—authorities remained anxious. Unlike West Indian men, who were needed for digging, West Indian women were not recruited or even welcomed. Consequently, they commonly faced harassment, especially single women who came to Panama in search of domestic work because it paid more than they could make in their homelands such as Jamaica or Barbados. Canal Zone officials often surveilled or investigated independent, unmarried women for prostitution and moral degeneracy. Those officials worried that “deviation from the goal of efficient construction rendered [West Indian women as] threats to the coherence of the American project” (80).

To get at West Indian women's experiences and ICC administrators' perceptions, Flores-Villalobos uses an impressive variety of bilingual sources, and her book is well-steeped in the relevant secondary literature about the canal project and early-twentieth-century Afro-Caribbean migrations. Although direct writings from her primary subjects are relatively sparse, she conducts clever readings of available materials to gain insight. This approach is most evident in Chapter 4, in which she analyzes white women's memoirs to see how Black women's labor was depicted. From these remembrances, she determines that “Black women emerge not as compliant servants and satisfied mammies, but as mediators and entrepreneurs, negotiating their relationship with their bosses to receive better pay, assert their sexual autonomy, and control the conditions of their labor” (113).

Flores-Villalobos provides an engaging and accessible framework for her analysis. Each chapter opens with a compelling grassroots anecdote that exemplifies a broader point and concludes with a helpful recapitulation of key ideas. In between, she clearly explains her arguments in direct, jargon-free prose. In sum, she effectively demonstrates how West Indian women were able to carve a space in the Panama Canal Zone for themselves and their families. In so doing, they simultaneously supported and challenged the broader US imperial project there. This book should find an audience among Latin American and Caribbean scholars as well as experts on the history of the Panama Canal.

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ACTIVISM OF MID-TWENTIETH-CENTURY HAITIAN WOMEN

White Gloves, Black Nation: Women, Citizenship, and Political Wayfaring in Haiti. By Grace Sanders Johnson. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2023. Pp. 328. \$99.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper; \$22.99 eBook.
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This publication is a most welcome addition to the small but growing scholarship on Caribbean women and gender studies. Its importance is even more appreciated when it is

considered that, while the overwhelming majority of research on the beleaguered nation of Haiti focuses on centuries of political instability, natural disasters, poverty, and other societal ills, this text adopts an alternate trajectory by carving out for interrogation a relatively positive dimension of Haitian affairs.

The title is intriguing but fully justified by the discourse the author constructs. The white gloves are superbly captured in the author's reference to "those women who got dressed to have tea" (7). And her description of "opulent, foreign, educated, self-interested, burgeoning professional class of women who understood themselves as descendants of the 1804 Haitian revolutionaries" (7) points directly to Black nation women. The reader also does not miss the appropriateness of the term 'wayfaring' in the title. The author carefully traces links between Haiti and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP; 67), Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Communities League (UNIA-ACL; 71), *The Canadian Press* (83), Ethiopia (110), Dahomey (116), Belgian Congo (195), South America, Germany, France, England, and Russia (187). The best example that the author articulates about Haitian women's political wayfaring is drawn from her analysis of the Pan American Day Fete celebrated annually in Haiti on April 14 (182). The author explains that, on this national Haitian holiday "girls wore the flags of twenty-one countries of the Pan American Union and walked to each country's national anthem reciting facts about the countries. The parade locked national with international elements" (184). Citizenship, a central theme of the book, especially citizenship for Haitian women, whom the author argues were treated like "minors, criminals or insane" (86), collaborated with internationally known gender-liberated organizations and countries to secure rights for themselves and visibility in a male chauvinistic, twentieth-century Haiti (149).

It ought to be noted that, while to a significant degree a historical framework shapes the book, it is multidisciplinary in scope. References to the Haitian Revolution, the reign of King Henri Christophe (131), the Trujillo-led Haitian Massacre of 1937 (127), and the period after the US 1915–1934 occupation of Haiti (35) constitute historical themes of the book. Unlike fundamental historiography, however, these themes are not chronologically presented. Distinct biographical features also shape the narrative. The writer not only relies heavily on source materials created by women of the Ligue Féminine d'Action Sociale (LFAS), but also offers surveys of their families, education, and social and political activities. Some of these women were: Alice Garoute, founding member and Vice President of the LFAS (14); Jean Sylvain, the social worker (102); and, the PhD in the group, Comhaire Sylvain, the researcher (150). The book, not surprisingly, is also characterized by a sociological construct that it derives not only from its thematic focus on marriage, education, sexual abuse, and urban and rural life but also from the fact that "the LFAS positioned their organization as an institution to study women" (94, 123). Ultimately, this scholarship is steeped in women and gender studies. It is about a group of "female teachers, attorneys, doctors, journalists and social workers" (92) who studied, wrote about, provided social services for, and encouraged rural and

lower-class women to join the middle-class movement of Haitian women to reform laws governing family life, earnings, and the vote (97, 98). From a gender perspective, the book includes the few men such as Dantes Bellegarde, Étienne Charlier, and Senator Rossini Pierre-Louis who supported the women's campaign (169). The author also highlights the many men led by Senator Démesmin in 1946 who were openly vicious in their rejection of the women's movement. Démesmin unapologetically declared that "The reality of Haitians prove that all the problems of the country come from women." He questioned "women's capabilities and also their loyalty and commitment to the nation" (170).

The gender voices in the text, while underscoring the political and other struggles between the sexes, also provide the balanced analysis that constitutes one of the hallmarks of this publication. On the one hand, the author celebrates the emergence of a women's movement in Haiti in the immediate post-World War II era. Women succeeded in operating the newspaper *La Voix des Femmes* (102). They also established an agency providing food and clothing for women and children called Pupilles des Saint-Antoine (101). A foyer where night classes and recreational activities were offered to working women was yet another accomplishment of Haitian women in this era (151). And, most importantly, a campaign to shape a modern Haiti where women had favorable marriage laws and the option to be involved in politics characterized the period (166). The author is to be commended for the objective manner in which she evaluated these efforts. Apart from the marriage law of 1944 that allowed married women to keep and control their labor earnings (158), she acknowledged that even the LFAS women "expressed frustration with the outcomes of their work" (127). Despite all their efforts, in 1946 "the Constitutional Assembly did not grant political rights to women" (172).

The final defeat notwithstanding, the author ought to be congratulated for constructing a women and gender narrative about Haiti that is neither altogether pessimistic nor unrealistically celebratory. While other writers of Haitian studies overlooked and/or ignored the social and political activism of mid-twentieth-century Haitian women, Sanders Johnson intellectualized this development.

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TRANSITION TO TWENTIETH-CENTURY MEXICO

Indigenous Autocracy: Power, Race, and Resources in Porfirian Tlaxcala, Mexico. By Jaclyn Ann Sumner. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2023. Pp. 226. Illustrations. Notes, Maps. Bibliography. \$28.00 paper.
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Desentrañar lo que implica la transición del México del siglo XIX y las primeras décadas del siglo XX, incluyendo la revolución, no es una tarea historiográfica sencilla a nivel