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**Christopher Robert Reed**. *The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1920-1929.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011. viii + 271 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-252-03623-1.

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Frederick Douglass's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition address asked listeners to "'measure the Negro ... from the depths out of which he has risen"' instead of from a position relative to the progress of "'the Caucasian,"' who, having not endured over two centuries of racial slavery in the United States, could in the late nineteenth century boast a "'splendid civilization"' (p. 71). Applying the proposal Douglass outlined, Christopher Robert Reed, author of *The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1920-1929*, argues that the record of African American progress in Chicago, when the New Negro era met the Jazz Age, affords an equally favorable evaluation. The most comprehensive study we now have of the transformation of Chicago's "Black Belt" into a "Black Metropolis" depicts an influential and dramatic demographic, social, economic, political, religious, and cultural flowering that rivaled the famed and well-documented Harlem Renaissance of the same era. Despite unemployment and racial discrimination, the south side of 1920s Chicago witnessed concentrated homegrown power by means of rapid population increase, "New Negro thinking" that emphasized racial self-governance, and a notion of progress principally defined as "spatial hegemony," says Reed (p. 2). By no means a spontaneous development, the making of African Americans' "'city within a city"' was a product of the groundwork established by an earlier generation in the late nineteenth century, deliberate and "conscious effort" by contemporaries, and larger municipal and national trends (p. 21). A leading scholar on the history of African Americans in Chicago, Reed proves that in important respects the "Black Metropolis" was a dream realized.

What is perhaps most beneficial to scholars of urban studies is the convincing and systematic way that *The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis* helps us to reconsider the analysis that has long held ground as the authority on the rise of African American Chicago in the early twentieth century, namely, St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton's *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* (1945). Reed invites future scholarship on the subject in offering not only a call for rethinking but also a method for doing so. Because Drake and Cayton took as their vantage point "the ruins of the Great Depression and the advent of global conflagration," Reed shows, the landmark research failed to appreciate and, in some cases, recognize the new dynamism of African American consciousness and advancement (p. 1). Reed highlights what Drake and Cayton touched on when he identifies what made the 1920s distinct, and revises their classic text as he applies the historical method to describe business, politics, religion, and activism in considerable detail.

*The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis* begins, appropriately, with the considerable rise in the number of mostly adult migrants pouring into the city's south side and forming a "pyramidal (class) structure" in which banker Jesse Binga and politician Edward H. Wright, for example, comprised the top; while medical, legal, architectural, and educational professionals, as well as small business owners, formed the middle; and the laboring class made up a large base (pp. 2, 25, 38). Reed's contention is noteworthy in that it departs from earlier surveys of African American Chicago by arguing that a traditional class pyramid began to form in the late nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries and crystallized in the 1920s. With his use of historical methodology and appreciation for the contexts and outlooks that framed works by Charles E. Johnson, E. Franklin Frazier, and Drake and Cayton, Reed helps scholars appreciate the timing of class formation among African Americans.

Aptly titled, Reed's "The Golden Age of African American Business" charts in fascinating and meticulous detail the rise of the rich economic institutions that provided the base from which African Americans wielded the political arm of their various projects. Illustrating the process by which political and economic undertak-

ings became mutually beneficial, Reed continues his call for a reappraisal of not only *Black Metropolis* but also economist Abram Harris's findings when he asserts that the three titans of African American business, Robert S. Abbott, Binga, and Anthony Overton, were "visionary" in their successful engineering of "the era of business" (pp. 79, 110). Challenging stereotypes and helping to strengthen Chicago's economy, African American enterprises in the renaissance decade produced the Binga Arcade, the Binga State Bank, the Douglass National Bank, the Overton's Building, the Liberty Life Insurance Company, the Masonic Temple, and the Knights of Pythias Building, among others. The effort to build the economic foundation of the "Black Metropolis," however, came not solely from those at the apex of Reid's class pyramid. The author emphasizes that though beset by economic limitations, members of the laboring class were also the consumer base that made State Street a key site of African American entrepreneurial success. Beauty and barber shops, dress shops, cosmetic stores, restaurants, cabarets, clubs, and manufacturing services in food processing, transportation, funeral and burial, and publishing lined State Street, the "locus of black economic power," making it possible for African American consumers to be "every bit as American as the millions of whites who were spending themselves into financial limbo" (pp. 81, 82). So successful were such business ventures that by decade's end, powerful city leaders and developers took special note, backing their interest in the "Black Metropolis" with capital investment. Reed makes a strong case for scholars to elevate Chicago's historical State Street to the high status reached by neighborhoods known for their economic production, such as Harlem; Durham, North Carolina's "Hayti"; and Tulsa, Oklahoma's "Little Africa."

If African American businesses rose in influence and power through increased financial capital and institutional structures, labor itself did not experience its own golden age of sorts, Reed shows. A postwar economic recession, high rates of unemployment and underemployment, and the racial discrimination that the laboring classes felt most acutely meant challenging times for this majority but also an emerging and robust working-class activism or trade unionism that set in motion "the groundswell for a determined civil rights thrust." Gaining momentum with the coming of severe economic depression, labor assumed a more confrontational style with, for example, the use of boycotts, such as the "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" consumer activist campaign (p. 119). Reed justifiably spends much of his time on "the aristocrats of African American labor," or Pullman porters, because with their founding of The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids in 1925 and achieving of union recognition in 1937 they became "the first, large-scale, independent attempt at African American unionization in the nation" (pp. 126, 127). With their sizeable ranks, political visibility, and social capital, the Pullman porters and postal workers who occupied the space below Reed's middling class and just above the laboring class represented labor's political progress in the decade. Though unable to point to widespread economic improvement, one learns that the African American laboring classes at the time won key political victories through a commitment to local control and a "community-based" unionism that together forged crucial, model interracial coalitions (pp. 131, 135). Other pockets of the laboring classes included those in civil service, public safety, food and clothing production, small electrical manufacturing, and, importantly, the underground economy.

In another strong chapter, Reed tells the second half of the story of African Americans' "control over the political economy of Chicago's Black Belt" through attention to political involvement and protest (p. 2). He shows how the 1920s marked a good moment to be a Republican as African American migrants entered the city, declared their membership in the party of Abraham Lincoln, and operated under the conviction that jobs and relative security came from government as a reward for political loyalty. What is insightful is how Reed's book situates national distinctions, such as Illinois's first African American state senator and the first African American representative in the U.S. Congress since the beginning of the twentieth century as well as the political muscle of the rank-and-file members of the party of Lincoln, within a larger narrative of a struggle on the part of African Americans for control over the inner workings of their district. We learn that the creation of influential African American voting blocs via housing discrimination, businesses–above and underground–that funded drives and campaigns, and the handing over of "Black Belt" districts to African American officials by prominent white Republicans accounted for such political success. It is important to note that while Reed points out that such political aspirations and activities depended on patronage politics and in turn white power brokers, he still finds a "far from total dependence on whites" (p. 155).

For Reed, such "civic organizations" as the Chicago Urban League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the "anti-establishment" Communist Party, U.S.A. (CPUSA) shared obstacles and issues that prevented them from becoming as strong of a resource as they could for "Black Metropo-

lis" residents. These included "the adverse image of the racial outsider in a tight-knit racially inclusive community," a lack of steady funding, interracial tensions between the board and staff, and few members "where volunteerism was necessary to fulfill programmatic and operational responsibilities" (p. 167). Reed finds that the Urban League's ability to partially overcome such challenges to make strides on the job front and improve interracial interactions did not carry over into the 1920s due to unemployment and a decrease in financial contributions. By mid-decade, the Chicago NAACP narrowed the gap between leaders and constituents when the organization embraced confrontational tactics and became an exclusively African American-led organization, two moves that fell right in line with the "ethos" of "new negro thinking" imbuing residents of the "Black Metropolis." Overall, though, Reed is critical of the three for their failure to make significant inroads among the African American masses. He argues that the Urban League and the NAACP "shared a basic sense of unawareness of either the possibility or the need for a massive systemic assault against economic injustice and inequality," while the CPUSA had the best solution but lacked the social capital it needed to draw African Americans to the party (p. 180). By contrast, black nationalism successfully competed with these three organizations, serving as a welcome departure. Reed lends more credibility to Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association than did Drake and Cayton, highlighting the numbers of prominent African American leaders–women and men–who supported the organization.

While the chapters on religion and culture are not as detailed as those on business and politics, they do provide further evidence for reassessing what we know. Here, again, Reed notes that perhaps due to "a priori assumptions, personal inclinations, and … a preoccupation with the celebrity of Harlem," Johnson and Frazier presented Chicago as a city lacking the rich cultural landscape that Reed locates (pp. 201-201). From the blues, vaudeville, film, cabarets and cafes, painting, and literature, cultural production reflected a proliferating African American artistic flowering in 1920s Chicago that is in need of scholarly recognition, according to Reed. Drawing on recent groundbreaking work on the religious fervor and institution building of Chicago's African American migrants in the early twentieth century, Reed describes how many who were desirous of freer worship styles and less bureaucracy called into question the workings of established mainline churches by constructing their own spaces. Here, Reed instructively sees no split between consumerism, materialism, and religiosity.

Golden ages do not last forever, and even the golden age of 1920s black Chicago was checkered at best. In the case of the rise of "Black Metropolis," Reed notes, signs of impending decline peeked through. Rising unemployment, a weakening job market, new investments from whites that redrew the boundaries of Chicago's African American entrepreneurial district, and a weakening African American consumer base stunted real and potential growth. But even with economic setbacks Chicago's African Americans made defining strides in terms of demography, social structure, business, labor, politics and protest, religion, and culture; the interconnectedness of which Reed most persuasively conveys. African Americans, acting just as white ethnic groups, "snared what control over their lives that they could by establishing a political base led by their leadership, started small businesses in the shadow of the giant downtown colossi in banking and retail, and worshipped under indigenous leaderships" (p. 209).

Reed urges us to interrogate the moment of the 1920s on its own terms, and weigh its contextual distinctions through emphasis on the blistering activities of those who propelled the awakening of their "'city within a city."' The continuous influx of migrants moving southward along State Street, as well as the emergence of African American community institutions committed to local advancement and the will to self-govern and control space, turned pioneering efforts into tangible results. What Reed has produced with *The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1920-1929* is a persuasive argument for the emergence of a relative African American triumphalism without the piety and sentimentalism that can often accompany such renderings, and a thorough accounting of the developments and contexts that made such possible.

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