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Mary E. Frederickson. *Looking South: Race, Gender, and the Transformation of Labor from Reconstruction to Globalization.* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011. 320 pp. $69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-3603-8.

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New Directions in the Study of Labor and the American South

When I teach the Progressive Era, students are often amazed to discover that the lively debates over issues of government regulation or labor reform that animate current public discourse were also vital a century ago. I dutifully caution against equating the past and present and I remind them that events that look the same can be quite different. Sometimes I offer contingency to explain why the reforms, conflicts, and hopes of a century ago are not necessarily ours. But, I usually hasten to add that this doesn't mean that the past and present are unrelated. Mary Frederickson's *Looking South: Race, Gender and the Transformation of Labor from Reconstruction to Globalization*, which connects the history and labor practices of a century ago to the sweatshops of today's developing world, deals with this relatedness.

Frederickson's narrative is organized around two critical junctions. The first involves the transformation of the southern economy caused by the emancipation of American slaves after the Civil War. The second involves the social, economic, and political changes produced by deindustrialization and globalization at the end of the twentieth century. Frederickson argues that the labor system that emerged in the American South after Reconstruction became a template for the labor system that developed in the global South–a region that includes Central and South America, along with India, Mexico, China, and numerous satellite states–more than one hundred years later. Both labor system boasted low wages, anti-unionism (sustained by child labor practices and by gender, racial, and ethnic divisions), and generous government assistance to manufacturers in the form of low taxes and weak labor protections. These qualities undermined labor unions, and made the American South and global South havens for manufacturers, but dreadful places for workers. At the same time, Frederickson hints at the revolutionary potential of the workplace, which reproduced social, economic and political inequalities, but also hosted the activism and resistance of workers. Just because workers in the U.S. South did not find dignity though labor does not mean that global workers will not. Still, moments of dissent described in *Looking South* seems to prove that unhappy workers voiced complaints, but not that those complaints had any hope of producing new policies.

The book begins with a thorough review of the social and political context of *Plessy v. Ferguson*, the 1896 Supreme Court decision that formalized "separate but equal" race relations. Frederickson argues that before *Plessy* reached the Supreme Court, while working its way through Louisiana courts, it was principally about labor issues, namely "mobility, unionism and interracial solidarity" (pp. 30-31). It would become principally about race. The logic of *Plessy*–that Black Americans were socially inferior–was contested. Frederickson captures this struggle between Black achievement and efforts to make Blacks inferior in an interesting discussion of photography. W. E. B. Dubois esteemed Black achievement at the Paris Exhibition in 1900 and the Pan-American Exhibition in Buffalo in 1901 as proof of the Black accomplishment. However, in response to the spate of riots in Wilmington, NC, Atlanta, GA, Tulsa, OK, and Rosewood, FL, that targeted and destroyed Black affluence and achievement, southern newspapers minimized depictions of violence against African Americans.

Frederickson is also interested in the ways that the status of working women was contested and examines the efforts of Black and white working women to foster political and economic change through the workplace. According to Frederickson, southern working women acted through unions, churches (principally Methodist and African Methodist Episcopal), and auxiliaries on a range of reform, suffrage, and worker campaigns. But, Frederickson adds, archetypes of the labor "heroine" in the earl -twentieth century–such Mother Jones, Ella May

Wiggins, and Mary Rudolph–or "working girls"–such as the "girl striker" or "daughter of the workforce"–distorted the realities of working-class life: women never had full membership as workers and southern women remained deeply divided by race. Frederickson's description of northern labor's response to the southern labor template is intriguing. Amid the threat of runaway shops and anxieties about the downward pressure the southern labor template exerted on northern wages, southern working women pushed for a greater commitment to equality on behalf of unions. After WWII, efforts to protect the closed shop in the North culminated in the Congress of Industrial Organization's (CIO) southern drive termed "Operation Dixie," designed to increase wages, to recruit women and Black workers, and to unseat conservative southern congressmen. Despite the effort of northern unions to protect shops and jobs, initiatives like Operation Dixie presided over declining union enrollment in southern textile mills. Federal labor legislation had a more lasting impact on the southern workforce. It was really only after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Frederickson explains, that Black workers would make inroads into southern mills. However, in demonstrating that civil rights and Black economic opportunity went hand in hand, Frederickson might also have explained how gender and racial equality made women and Black workers less desirable. In either case, by the mid-twentieth century, the southern labor template was poised to define labor relations outside its borders.

The book's final section brings the story up to the recession of 2008. As Frederickson explains, after 1965 the South was made global by "new immigration," which benefited from civil rights protections, and Atlanta emerged as America's "new Ellis Island". However, in refining its labor template–low wages, anti-unionism, government support of business–Frederickson argues that the South was creating a labor model that would also define work and life in the global South. Frederickson concludes her story on a pessimistic tone. Through the promise of emancipation, the labor battles of the 1920s, and the hopes of the civil rights era southern labor repeatedly failed to live up to a vision of human equality and dignity.

Looking South's greatest strength is arguably the source of its biggest shortcoming. By positioning the American South as the sponsor of an economic model that flourished in developing nations at the end of the twentieth century, Frederickson marks the South as a site of innovation and suggests important new research for the study of labor history in the southern United States and that region's relationship to the developing world. The United States did not just uplift the hoardes of war-torn Europe with the Marshall Plan, it also created and exported an enduring model for child and sweatshop labor exploitation–a very different legacy. However, at times this linkage between the American South of a century ago and the global South is too tidy. As Frederickson demonstrates, the South is a complicated and dynamic region shaped by multiple and sometimes conflicting experiences. It was also shaped in powerful ways by the world outside its borders. It is not clear that mills, which were dangerous and unorganized places when they populated New England through the nineteenth century, or that the Taft Hartley Act, the federal labor legislation allowing for (among other things) state "right to work" laws, tell uniquely southern stories–or that conditions in Carolina mills a century ago were the same as conditions in Vietnam, Mexico, or Uzbekastan today. In short, Frederickson shows how the global and U.S. South go together, but she leaves little room for contingency, for the ways work was defined at various places across the global South by local actors. Perhaps this is the work of future studies. On a final note, Frederickon's story complements recent studies by Judith Stein and Jefferson Cowie that tell the story of labor and capitalism since the 1970s and that describe the loss of rights, jobs, and manhood. Against this narrative of loss and decline, Frederickson tells a story of renewal, although the renewal produced by the southern labor template and its application in the global South may not be the renewal we desire.

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