

This ranged from indenturing themselves and/or their children to remaining in service to protective former masters in order to avoid kidnapping. They also did so to seek the umbrella of “belonging” that was so crucial in a society with no public version of social security.

Second, in a seamless motion, Dunbar shifts her readers from the relationships between black semifree women and the white world to the relationships among women who shared a similar racial identity but not the same culture, values, or notions of decorum. Quilting together a fascinating patchwork from scraps of court records, church committee minutes, newspaper advertisements, city directories, and letters, Dunbar gives us a glimpse as to how cultural norms were navigated and negotiated within particular sectors of Philadelphia’s black communities. She focuses in particular on the importance of church committees in setting and enforcing of these norms.

Finally, by examining the exchange of gift books among middle- and upper-class black women, Dunbar takes us to the “mental and moral feast” laid out by these women as they made a space for themselves in the emerging print culture that fed, and was fed by, the developing market revolution of America’s early decades. Concluding that what was at stake was a quest for autonomy and the attempt to fashion a new political landscape, she makes us wish that she had compressed chapters 1 and 2—which repeat information easily found elsewhere—and given even more analysis in chapters 5 and 6, which introduce heretofore unexplored primary data and tantalizing ideas about how that data might be exploited.

A highly readable style and comprehensive bibliography that stretches across more than a century of scholarship add to the value of this short study. Dunbar has laid the groundwork and created an intriguing template for integrating upper- and lower-class interactions, issues, and tensions with other variables such as geography, religion, and behaviors. Let’s hope that other scholars take the opportunity to expand upon Dunbar’s work.

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Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880–1910. By KALI N. GROSS. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006. xii, 260 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$21.95.)

Kali N. Gross’s *Colored Amazons: Crime, Violence, and Black Women in the City of Brotherly Love, 1880–1910* is a well-documented study that provides demographic data on the crimes, class, and geographic origins of Philadelphia’s black female population. But this study is also much more. It offers the reader a glimpse into the social milieu of the world in which these women lived, worked,

and committed crimes, and it contextualizes it within the discourses of urban and penal reform. Gross contends that “black women’s criminal experiences elucidate the ways in which race, gender, and sexuality are mediated and how black womanhood is negotiated within the criminal justice system” (2). Moreover, she explores the meaning of democracy and argues persuasively that the actions of the courts and the penal institutions, reform advocates, and the press were designed to preserve white supremacy at the expense of justice for black womanhood. *Colored Amazons* is significant because it also sheds light on the lives of a segment of working-class and poor black women whose experiences largely had been ignored by feminist historians and African Americanists whose studies focused on the black middle and upper classes.

Gross observes that crimes committed by black women reflected their poverty and marginalization in the city and nationwide. She notes that black women received disproportionate conviction and sentencing rates in comparison to white women and black and white men in the criminal justice systems. Gross attributes this phenomenon to the negative stereotypes of black women that were so pervasive during the pre-Civil War era and that intensified during the late nineteenth century with the proliferation of a pseudoscientific body of literature. She argues that the negative images “essentially maligned black female virtue and made all black women visual metaphors of female immorality” (10). These racist beliefs governed black women’s treatment in the criminal justice system—from the decisions that judges handed down to the quality of their lives in prison to the way the mainstream press reported their crimes.

The general population was imbued with these same stereotypes. The subordinate status to which black women had been relegated limited their access to housing and jobs and assured that they would remain isolated from the pulse of the city and would have to live in high-crime areas. Gross contends that some prisoners developed healthy self-concepts and values that contradicted the negative stereotypes that circumscribed their lives. These women exercised agency despite society’s negative and hostile depictions of their race and gender and, in some instances, because of them. For some, crime became a business, an extra-legal source of income, and they manipulated the system to their benefit. “Badgers” who attacked their “johns” received moderate sentences, or none at all, for their sex crimes because their assaults on white men acted as a means “to protect” them from immorality. But, ultimately, even they capitulated to the system.

The prisoners whose lives Gross examines entered the historical record only when they became involved in the criminal justice system. Through intake registers and penitentiary dockets, trial transcripts, police and corrections reports, and newspaper accounts, she skillfully weaves a portrayal of their world and documents the historical role that racism played in it. Her analysis sheds new light on black women and crime—whether they were victims of racism and gender bias, or consumed by greed, psychological illnesses, or predatory behavior. Scholars

interested in urban studies, criminal justice, African American studies, sociology, and women's studies will find *Colored Amazons* essential reading.

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Wobblies on the Waterfront: Interracial Unionism in Progressive-Era Philadelphia. By PETER COLE. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007. x, 227 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.)

Peter Cole has high ambitions: to rescue Local 8 of the National Industrial Union of Marine Transport Workers from obscurity. He succeeds admirably. Local 8, based along the Philadelphia waterfront, deserves serious scholarly treatment. It was the largest and most enduring union formed under the aegis of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in the first decades of the twentieth century. Local 8 represented a remarkable alliance of white and black workers, and the union, while pragmatically fighting for improved working conditions for its member longshoremen, held to revolutionary principles. In unearthing the history of Local 8, Cole revives interest in the IWW, contributes to longstanding debates on American trade unions and the lives of African American workers, and illuminates a period in the labor history of Philadelphia that has been greatly neglected.

Cole first describes the backbreaking and perilous work of Philadelphia longshoremen, hostile ethnic and racial relations among dockworkers in the city during the nineteenth century, and successive failures at unionization. In the spring of 1913, IWW organizers began mobilizing sugar refinery workers, and the initiative spread to nearby docks. On May 14, 1913, thousands of longshoremen walked off their jobs in an IWW-inspired strike. Within two weeks, following street fighting among strikers, strikebreakers, and the police, ship owners conceded, granting wage increases, overtime pay, and reduced hours. Abiding by their anarcho-syndicalist ideals, IWW leaders refused to sign and be bound by a contract, insisting that the dockworkers could strike whenever they saw fit.

Local 8 thus emerged and maintained a stronghold for nine years. Cole offers no single explanation for the IWW's success on the Philadelphia waterfront. The union benefited from extraordinary local leadership, most notably that of Benjamin Fletcher, an African American dockworker. The IWW committed to mobilizing across ethnic and racial lines, and with African Americans comprising a majority of the longshoremen, Local 8 repelled employers' efforts to break the union by hiring black strikebreakers. The employers themselves were divided, and Local 8 also faced minimal challenges from mainstream unions (the International Longshoremen's Union, an affiliate of the American Federation of Labor, had not earmarked Philadelphia for organization).