Review of *African Americans on the Great Plains: An Anthology* edited and with an introduction by Bruce A. Glasrud and Charles A. Braithwaite

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In the last decade, Great Plains Quarterly has taken the lead in soliciting and publishing articles about the African American experience in the Central Plains. Editors Bruce A. Glasrud and Charles A. Braithwaite have incorporated these articles into a single anthology that should become required reading in college history courses throughout the region. Unfortunately for readers of this journal, however, the book offers little in the way of new information about this important topic.

The editors provide a brief historiographical introduction that details the important scholarly contributions to Great Plains African American history. Although the editors’ definition of the region stretches from Texas to Minnesota, the bulk of their introduction and nearly every article in the anthology is dedicated to the Central Plains of Kansas and Nebraska. The editors briefly address the differences between the Southern and Northern Plains, but generally avoid regional comparisons and analysis. Instead, they devote the bulk of this first chapter to historiography and an introduction of the fourteen articles that follow.

The strength of this anthology lies in a number of excellent articles that incorporate regional and national history. For example, Thomas Buecker seamlessly connects the relationship between the 25th Infantry and the Great Plains community of Central Nebraska into the larger narrative of the 1906 Brownsville Riot. Shawn Alexander relates the story of a single lynching in northeastern Kansas within the context of racial lynchings throughout the country. More importantly, Alexander’s chapter details the agency and activism of black communities throughout Kansas and Iowa in confronting white authorities in the aftermath of the lynching through their local chapters of the Afro-American Council. Additional articles likewise connect regional and national history by discussing black migration to and from the region, racial violence, black fraternal organizations, art and music, and civil rights activism.

The book’s most obvious shortcoming is that beyond its introductory chapter, it is nothing more than a collection of articles with which any scholar of the African American experience in the Great Plains will already be familiar. The editors miss an opportunity to tie these articles together or offer any definitive conclusions about the region’s history, largely because the articles they selected lack a central theme and are not representative of the entire
region. The inclusion of articles from a variety of journals could have vastly improved the quality of the anthology and allowed its editors to provide readers with articles about the Southern and Northern Plains. Equally important, a wider range of journals would have given the editors the ability to divide the book into clusters of articles based on central themes.

Readers of this journal will likely agree with editors Glasrud and Braithwaite that a book-length study on the African American experience in the Great Plains is long overdue. Readers of this journal and the editors' anthology, however, will still be forced to conclude that a book-length study is still needed and wonder how one might ever produce one that incorporates such a large and diverse region. For educators living in the Central Plains, however, this anthology provides an outstanding resource to introduce local history into their classrooms.

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