

Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH)

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ASALH announces the publication of the latest issue in the second century of *The Journal of African American History*.

Special Issue

"The Scholarship and Social and Educational Activism of V. P. Franklin"

Guest Editor Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua

The Journal of Negro History/Journal of African American History (JAAH) published its centennial volume in 2015. At the centennial conference for ASALH, held in Atlanta in September 2015, a plenary session was devoted to the scholarship and social activism of V. P. Franklin, the JAAH Editor since 2002. The Summer 2017 issue contains the expanded versions of the presentations made at that plenary session.

"A Life of Writing and Research on the Civil Rights Movement" by Bettye Collier-Thomas describes V. P. Franklin's family background and the various books he authored, co-authored, and co-edited on the civil rights campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s. In addition to these five works, Collier-Thomas discusses the public history projects in this area Franklin mounted, including "Protest and Participation - Freedom Ain't Free: The Photographs by Jack T. Franklin" on display at the Afro-American Museum in Philadelphia in 1992; and "Children, Youth, and Civil Rights, 1951-1968" which opened at the University of California, Riverside's Library in May 2013 on the fiftieth anniversary of the Birmingham "Children's Crusade."

Mary Frances Berry wrote "On the Editorship of *The Journal of African American History*" and emphasizes the importance of the scholarly journal for the maintenance and expansion of learned societies. She examines the reciprocal relationship between the journal and the organization and describes how articles published in the *JAAH* have documented new and original areas of research and offered new interpretations of the African American experience. Berry concludes that "The pattern that V. P. Franklin has laid out to situate the *JAAH* appropriately in the scholarly landscape provides a playbook for the future."

"On V. P. Franklin's *Black Self-Determination: A Cultural History of the Faith of the Fathers* – A Neglected Classic" by Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua examines the themes and responses to that

work, first published in 1984. Cha-Jua describes the conservative intellectual and ideological landscape in the 1980s so that Franklin's work was not reviewed in most scholarly journals; and when it was reviewed, the comments were negative. Franklin used "mass testimony" to document African Americans' core values – freedom, resistance, education, and self-determination – and argued that these beliefs help to explain the responses of the African American masses to the return of former Confederates to power in the southern states in the late 1870s; the "Africa fever" that often swept through black communities; and the support for the Garvey Movement in the 1920s. Cha-Jua reveals the popularity of Franklin's *Black Self-Determination* among college teachers and students in the 1980s and 1990s.

Pero Gaglo Dagbovie assesses "Over Forty Years 'Defending the Race' and Writing Black History" and devotes much space to examining the book reviews and articles V. P. Franklin has written, especially in the area of African American intellectual history. He reports that Franklin challenged the findings and conclusions of various researchers who offered superficial or inaccurate portrayals of African Americans historically. In the discussion of Franklin's contribution to African American intellectual history, Dagbovie emphasizes Franklin's documentation of the "scholar-activist" tradition which is distinctive to African Americans in the United States, and manifests itself in the leadership roles of black intellectuals in social movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In "V. P. Franklin and the Case for Reparations," James B. Stewart surveys the scholarly articles on African American reparations movements published in the *JAAH* and compares the approaches offered by Franklin and other historians with those put forward by economists, political scientists, and legal experts. While reparations movements have arisen from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries, some have been more successful than others in gaining the support of the masses of African Americans. Stewart applauds Franklin's call for the establishment of a "Reparations Superfund" because it offers a collective, rather than an individual, approach to reparations payments; and it is aimed at improving the social and educational conditions for African American children and young people.

Derrick P. Aldridge's interview with V. P. Franklin, "On the Making of a Scholar-Activist and Educational Historian," reveals how and why Franklin chose to study African American educational history, and includes information on Franklin's social activism in Arizona following the rescinding the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday in 1987. Franklin was denied many other academic positions following the publication of *Black Self-Determination* in 1984; and during his period of "internal exile" at Arizona State University, he led the campaigns to have the holiday restored at colleges and universities throughout the state. Franklin's participation in twenty-first century reparations campaigns is a continuation of his social activism.

In the *JAAH* Summer 2017 issue, there is an Essay Review by Jeffrey R. Kerr-Ritchie on three books that examine African Americans' paths to freedom in the era of slavery; and another by Stephanie Ann-Wilks Simpson on an important new anthology on African Americans and Islam. There are also reviews of 15 recently published books on the African American experience.

The JAAH Summer 2017 issue is available for purchase from ASALH in hard copy, and for use in courses through Publications Director, Karen May, at kmay@asalh.net. The digital version will soon be available through “JSTOR Current Journals”; please check and make sure your university library subscribes to the program.

Be sure your membership is up to date. Forthcoming JAAH issues will examine “African American Migrations during and after the Civil War,” “National and International Reparations Movements,” and “300 Years of the African American Experience in New Orleans.”

For more information, go to the JAAH website: www.jaah.org; or contact Sylvia Cyrus, JAAH Managing Editor, executive.director@asalh.net.