

Winning the War for Democracy: The March on Washington Movement, 1941-1946

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ect failed to alter white depictions of southern states in the federal guides. Further, overtly political art provided grist for conservative attacks on the art projects specifically, and against the New Deal more broadly. Finally, Musher judges the “art as experience” approach as the most successful because the sense of public ownership of the arts outlasted the New Deal in the form of community art centers, the popularization of folk cultures, and progressive art education.

Musher applies her history of New Deal arts funding to contemporary questions of arts funding. Warning of the political implications of using art as a weapon, and lamenting the purely economic justifications used by recent supporters of federal art funding, Musher argues that advocates should take a lesson from the 1930s art-as-experience activists who argued that, beyond creating jobs and stimulating the economy, the arts “make us more thoughtful, satisfied, and engaged citizens” (218).

Winning the War for Democracy: The March on Washington Movement, 1941–1946, by David Lucander. Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014. xi, 320 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Kristin Anderson-Bricker is associate professor of history at Loras College. Her Ph.D. dissertation (Syracuse University, 1997) was “Making a Movement: The Meaning of Community in the Congress of Racial Equality, 1958–1968.”

Although history textbooks mention the threatened March on Washington in 1941 for jobs and freedom, most Americans are unfamiliar with the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) that took place during World War II. In fact, A. Philip Randolph initiated a national movement that proved most successful at the local level. In *Winning the War for Democracy*, David Lucander goes beyond the activities surrounding Randolph to explore the MOWM in St. Louis, Missouri. Lucander sees the St. Louis chapter as the most dynamic and successful of the 37 branches (73). These local activists shared a commitment to the Double V campaign announced by the *Philadelphia Courier* in 1942. World War II provided a unique opportunity for African Americans to express their patriotism by helping to defeat fascism abroad and racism at home. While black men fought foreign enemies, those African Americans remaining on the home front worked to make democracy real in their communities. The all-black organization saw employment as a route to a better life, so local chapters focused on increasing African Americans’ access first to defense industry jobs and later to skilled

work in private companies and public utilities. They also protested segregation in public accommodations.

MOWM evolved from a one-time march intended to force the federal government to live up to the promise of Executive Order 8802, issued in June 1941, which barred discrimination by industries receiving federal funds. The order also established the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) to investigate complaints of racial bias by defense contractors. Given little money or manpower, the FEPC relied on local chapters of the MOWM to investigate complaints of discrimination. Members of MOWM chapters also used nonviolent direct action to pressure businesses to comply with the executive order. Working primarily through mass meetings, marches, and picket lines, local activists threatened federal intervention if industries failed to democratize their hiring practices. The St. Louis group targeted two defense industries: Carter Carburetor and U.S. Cartridge. They also pressured Southwestern Bell Telephone to open up professional positions as switchboard operators to black women. Finally, the St. Louis MOWM undertook a campaign to integrate department store lunch counters using sit-ins during the summer of 1944.

David Lucander effectively situates this study in relation to the historiography of the struggle for black equality. By discussing both the national MOWM and the St. Louis chapter, he explores the interplay between a national organization and its grassroots branches. He confirms that local chapters both relied upon national infrastructure and acted independently. He demonstrates the localism of the chapter by charting the collaboration across organizations that occurred in St. Louis throughout the war, while at the same time the national offices of the NAACP and Urban League refused to collaborate with A. Philip Randolph's upstart movement. Lucander also documents the differentiation between male and female roles in the MOWM. While males served in all public leadership roles, females constituted the bulk of the grassroots membership and labored extensively to achieve the group's goals. Finally, he situates the activism as part of "the long movement." Although today we see their efforts as a precursor to the civil rights movement, they saw their actions as a continuation of progressivism and the New Deal.

Winning the War for Democracy presents the argument that a mid-western community offered the most significant fight against racism during World War II. Lucander succeeds in conveying the centrality of this small group of people in St. Louis to extending the influence of the aborted March on Washington and Executive Order 8802. He also humanizes and individualizes the movement by providing detailed

discussion of the local people who make movements happen. Two of the MOWM's particularly powerful driving forces were their belief in the psychological importance of an all-black movement and the centrality of respectability. To prove racists wrong, MOWM insisted on African Americans conducting themselves with dignity and refinement. The St. Louis MOWM also emphasized collaboration across class lines and affiliations. Lucander especially excels at exploring the network created by reformers who labored against racism during World War II. If judged by its eight-point program, MOWM cannot be judged successful. But Lucander sees it as a success: "MOWM served as a conduit, introducing and refining techniques that would ultimately overthrow de jure racial segregation in the United States within the next two decades" (176). The organization also fostered leadership skills in its members, and some of these "individuals would use their experiences of fighting racism in World War II to jump-start a lifetime of activism" (192).

The Crops Look Good: News from a Midwestern Family Farm, by Sara DeLuca. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2015. ix, 254 pp. Map, illustrations, family tree, source notes, index. \$17.95 paperback.

Reviewer Pamela Riney-Kehrberg is professor of history at Iowa State University. She is the author of *The Nature of Childhood: An Environmental History of Growing Up in America since 1865* (2014) and *Childhood on the Farm: Work, Play, and Coming of Age in the Midwest* (2005).

Poet and writer Sara DeLuca grew up in Polk County, Wisconsin. *The Crops Look Good: News from a Midwestern Family Farm* is the story of her parents and grandparents, told through family letters, local newspapers, and family lore, including oral histories. The family was large. As the parents' nine children left home and made their way to farms, jobs, and marriages, they wrote to their mother about their new experiences, and she, in turn, wrote to them about life at home on the farm. Woven through all of this are bits and pieces of local and national news. There's a lot going on in this story, with cows being milked, school being taught, and babies being born. It's a particular family's story, but one that will seem familiar to those with roots in the nation's rural midsection.

There is much that this book does right. It is well written and engaging and successfully takes readers to an earlier era of family farming in the upper Midwest. One problem with the writing, however, is that the author has written in the present tense, which is a bit of a jolt in a family history. Once the reader adjusts to that, however, it be-