

## Across the Wide River

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have tended primarily to debate how accurate those sources are as evidence of life under slavery; Hirsch asks us to subject the materials to a new, probably more useful set of questions. Whether the life histories collected from ex-slaves yield accurate information about life under slavery is difficult to know, but they certainly reveal something about how ex-slaves interpreted their experience, and, importantly, about how researchers perceived ex-slaves as subjects. The material that Hirsch unearthed on Sterling Brown's effort to check and correct often distorted and racist views of African Americans in locally produced materials is fascinating and very telling. It certainly bolsters his claims that federal officials and local writers were often at odds in their outlook. Still, I wanted to know more about some of those local writers, researchers, and interviewers, particularly given Hirsch's assertion that such information is not too difficult to ascertain.

The final section of the book, "Denouement," contains chapters dealing with investigation of the FWP by the Dies Committee (the predecessor of the House Un-American Activities Committee) and the transformation of the Writers' Project into the Writers' Program. Hirsch makes it clear that accusations leveled against the program reflected the discomfort conservative Americans felt with challenges to the traditional position of working-class people, ethnic groups, and African Americans in the American social hierarchy. Hirsch's final chapter suggests how the FWP's pluralist agenda was co-opted to serve the project of building consensus, patriotism, and unity during wartime.

Many of the American Guides have been reprinted in recent years, and several previously unpublished FWP studies have found a new audience, suggesting the FWP's contemporary relevance. This is particularly true as Americans in a period of crisis attempt to define themselves and uncover a basis for unity while respecting diversity. Moreover, Hirsch's book provides a useful historical perspective on ongoing debates about government funding of the arts.

*Across the Wide River*, by William Hewitt. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2003. 96 pp. Bibliography. \$11.95 cloth.

Reviewer Thomas A. Britten is assistant professor of history at the University of Texas at Brownsville. He is the author of *American Indians in World War I: At War and at Home* (1997) and coauthor of "The Sergeant John R. Rice Incident and the Paradox of Indian Civil Rights" in this issue of the *Annals of Iowa*.

In August 1951 officials at Memorial Park Cemetery in Sioux City denied burial to John R. Rice—a decorated veteran of Winnebago descent who had been killed in Korea—because the cemetery was for "whites

only." The resulting unfavorable media coverage brought national condemnation upon both Sioux City and cemetery officials. President Harry Truman quickly stepped in and had Rice interred at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors. William Hewitt's excellent novel, *Across the Wide River*, tells the dramatic story of the "John Rice incident" from the perspective of Rice's adolescent son John Jr.

Written for young adults, *Across the Wide River* is rich in symbolism and holds important lessons for readers of all ages. In addition to dealing with the loss of his father, John (Coup Feather) faces discrimination from whites in Sioux City and rejection from young Winnebagos who distrust him because he does not live on "the res" and because his mother is white. Hewitt uses this theme of dual alienation effectively to inform readers about the tough choices facing many American Indians in the 1950s. The book also offers important insights into Winnebago culture and history, and about the role of American Indians in the U.S. military.

My twelve-year-old son also read the book and readily understood its plot and major themes. His favorite character was John's wise old Winnebago grandfather, who offered the young boy counsel on how best to reconcile his racial and cultural heritages.

I highly recommend *Across the Wide River* for readers both young and old interested in American Indian history and culture or twentieth-century Iowa and Nebraska history.

*Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965–1975*, by Joy Ann Williamson. Champaign and Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003. xii, 192 pp. Illustrations, notes, appendixes, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Rusty Monhollon is assistant professor of history at Hood College. He is the author of *This Is America? The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas* (2002).

Of the various expressions of activism in the 1960s, the Black Power movement is perhaps the least studied and least understood. That is unfortunate, as the movement, generally identified with organizations such as the Black Panthers, redefined in important ways the nation's discourse on race. In *Black Power on Campus*, Joy Ann Williamson sheds new light on the movement by exploring how Black Power shaped institutions of higher education (as well as the nature of higher education reform itself) in the late sixties and early seventies. Williamson seeks to know how social movements—rather than federal initiatives and legislative mandates—shaped curricular changes in higher education.

The importance of education to African Americans, Williamson notes, made higher education a significant site of the black freedom

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