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### **Review of *African American Workers and the Appalachian Coal Industry*, by Joe William Trotter, Jr.**

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In a region historically plagued by extractive industry, new interpretations of capitalism may be exactly what is needed. For that, *Ginseng Diggers* is an impressive step forward.

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*African American Workers and the Appalachian Coal Industry.* By Joe William Trotter, Jr. (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2022. Pp. 176. \$34.99 cloth; ebook \$34.99)

Joe William Trotter, Jr., ranks among the pantheon of America's most influential historians. For more than forty years, beginning with his 1985 work *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915–1945*, he has chronicled the African American experience, most profoundly on the centrality of the Black working class to America's economic, industrial, cultural, and political development. His pioneering and provocative work examining the intersections of race, class, labor, urbanization, and gender within diverse urban- and rural-industrial settings has challenged prevailing historiography and expanded our understanding of Black migration, labor relations, and community formation. It has also added important dimensionality, complexity, and agency to Black workers, families, and communities within the historical narrative.

Arguably, Trotter's most enduring contribution to our understanding of the African American urban experience was his employment of the proletarianization model in *Black Milwaukee* as an alternative theoretical framework to the long-standing "ghetto synthesis" model. That study animated important dialog and debate in its prioritization of class over racial identification as the defining consciousness of the Black working-class experience. In a 2007 *Journal of Urban*

*History* essay, Trotter acknowledges some of the limitations of his proletarianization model. In it, he concludes, “were I to write *Black Milwaukee* today, I would seek to synthesize past and present intellectual currents in African American urban and labor historiography, pay closer attention to the relationship between different eras in the transformation of African American life, and offer a broader and more comprehensive case study of the Black urban experience.”<sup>1</sup>

The culmination of these objectives are the five essays comprising his most recent book, *African American Workers and the Appalachian Coal Industry*. Encompassing nearly thirty years of research on the African American experience, class, and race relations, in the Appalachian coal fields, the collection reiterates the continuing relevancy of the proletarianization model as an analytical tool—in this instance, primarily in its examination of the working-class experience of Black coal miners within his homeplace of the southern West Virginia coal mining region. Here, as a boy, Trotter experienced the disproportional impact of technological, social, and political changes on Black workers, families, and communities after World War II, which caused unemployment and out-migration.

This reassessment of the field since *Black Milwaukee*’s publication embraces innovations in scholarship on racial, class, and gender dynamics of working-class formation as ways to reformulate the proletarianization model. In presenting the coronavirus as one of the rationales for its publication, the essays historicize the continuing vulnerability of poor and working-class Blacks and people of color who work and live in dangerous, racialized, and unhealthy environments.

This collection cement’s Trotter’s status as the foremost historian on U.S. labor and working-class studies. Its summary of the history and historiography of Black coal miners in Appalachia posits the continuing theoretical applicability of the proletarianization model in the twenty-first century, points to new pathways to pursue to explore its utility, and underscores the continuing resonance of his

<sup>1</sup> Joe William Trotter, Jr. “Black Milwaukee: Reflections on the Past Twenty Years,” *Journal of Urban History* 33 (May 2007): 567.

southern West Virginia upbringing on his scholarship. Highly readable, meticulously researched, and skillfully rendered, *African American Workers* is a worthy addition to Trotter's remarkable legacy.

CICERO M. FAIN, III is visiting diversity scholar at Marshall University and the author of *Black Huntington: An Appalachian Story*. His current book project is entitled *Buffalo Soldier, Deserter, Criminal: The Remarkably Complicated Life of Charles Ringo*.

*Creek Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763–1818*. By James L. Hill. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022. Pp. 324. \$65.00 cloth; \$65.00 ebook)

Historians of foreign relations often struggle to define the amount of control that ordinary people have over the crafting of foreign policy. In the United States, diplomatic historians tend to focus on the exploits of towering figures such as William Henry Seward and Henry Kissinger. On the rare occasions when the voting public is discussed, they are often depicted as an irrational body that fails to understand the nuances of international relations. Fortunately for us, James L. Hill rejects this notion in his excellent *Creek Internationalism in an Age of Revolution, 1763–1818*. Instead of merely focusing on the leader of each Creek town (known as the mēkko), Hill illustrates how each mēkko relied upon the advice and council of talwas (a community) and talofas (a smaller community that splintered from a talwa). Together, these communities helped forge what Hill refers to as “Creek internationalism,” a foreign policy aimed at securing “recognition that their communities possessed sovereign rights equivalent to those of Euro-American nation-states” (pp. 15–16).

Hill deftly uses chronological chapters to illustrate how Creek internationalism evolved over time. Chapter one demonstrates how various “Creek travelers. . . sought to forge new Euro-American