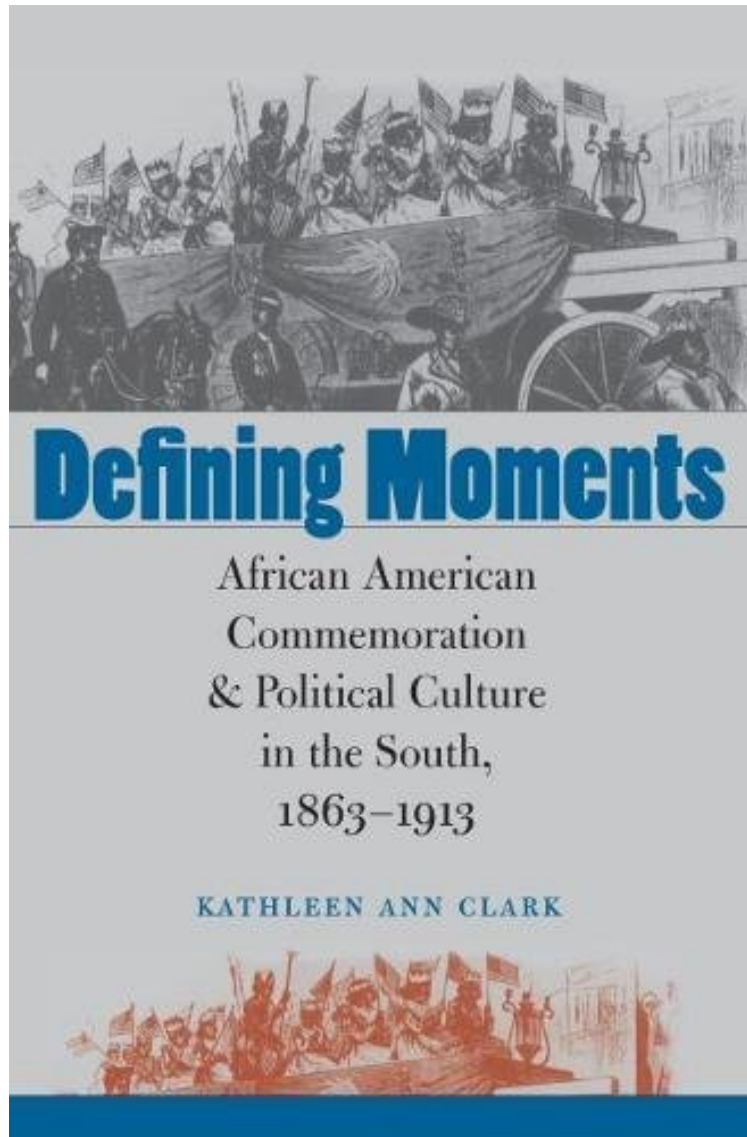


(Read now) Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913

Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913

Kathleen Ann Clark

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Kathleen Ann Clark : Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913 before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Defining Moment Defined?By PC from Silicon ValleyIf historical analysis absolutely has to be distorted by the whims of political correctness, it should at least be twisted into something recognizable to readers. Here, however, the text is driven by two problematic and rather sugary impulses—the desire to view Southern history as “relevant” in some innovative way and the perceived need to depict African-American leaders of the Reconstruction period as being so “special” as to inspire right thinking in later generations. The two impulses don’t really work all that well together in forming a convincing whole. Clark has done a solid job of assembling the available information on how urban African-Americans commemorated Emancipation Day and other civic celebrations of the 19th century. But this is about as far as her study takes her. Much of the rest, sad to say, is puffery. There is something patronizing in the assumption that today’s readers require an uplifting tale to get them to commit to a better future. At one point, Clack asserts that “all Americans” should offer thanks to conservative Black leaders for their work in trying to build a nation free of racism. But those men (and a few women—who get an ornate and unconvincing “gendered” treatment at several points) were abject failures in constructing that happier future. This was obvious during their own lifetimes and their role does not really get any more significant upon examination. It isn’t clear that Booker T. Washington felt all that inspired by their example. Martin Luther King would think the early Black leaders ineffective at best, perhaps a little sad. And Malcolm would laugh.

The historical memory of the Civil War and Reconstruction has earned increasing attention from scholars. Only recently, however, have historians begun to explore African American efforts to interpret those events. With *Defining Moments*, Kathleen Clark shines new light on African American commemorative traditions in the South, where events such as Emancipation Day and Fourth of July ceremonies served as opportunities for African Americans to assert their own understandings of slavery, the Civil War, and Emancipation--efforts that were vital to the struggles to define, assert, and defend African American freedom and citizenship. Focusing on urban celebrations that drew crowds from surrounding rural areas, Clark finds that commemorations served as critical forums for African Americans to define themselves collectively. As they struggled to assert their freedom and citizenship, African Americans wrestled with issues such as the content and meaning of black history, class-inflected ideas of respectability and progress, and gendered notions of citizenship. Clark's examination of the people and events that shaped complex struggles over public self-representation in African American communities brings new understanding of southern black political culture in the decades following Emancipation and provides a more complete picture of historical memory in the South.

"Through vivid, evocative stories, Clark charts an ongoing public debate among African Americans about how to narrate their history and define the nature of their progress since Emancipation. The book's high points are its close examinations of people or events that reflect the complexities of this struggle; Clark's discussions of Augusta's Emancipation Day and of the career of Charles Hunter bring lost worlds to life. (Stephen Kantrowitz, University of Wisconsin-Madison) " "An intriguing analysis of African-American celebrations of freedom during the late nineteenth century. . . . A worthy addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of the period." -- "Georgia Historical Quarterly" "Clark seeks to uplift and inspire with a steady drumbeat of African American agency and resistance on the long march to freedom." -- "Journal of American History" Clark's well-researched study is a great addition to the growing literature on the black experience in America.--Historian Clark seeks to uplift and inspire with a steady drumbeat of African American agency and resistance on the long march to freedom.--Journal of American History An excellent study of an important topic, and should find its way onto the shelves of all scholars interested in African American and Southern history and the politics of commemoration.--Southern Historian The amalgamation of emancipation celebrations, African American political culture, and American intellectual history has never before been so fully or so intelligently explored as in *Defining Moments: African American Commemoration and Political Culture in the South, 1863-1913*.--Journal of Southern History The first monograph to concentrate exclusively on southern African American commemorations in the fifty years following emancipation. . . . Has helped establish a firm foundation for further studies.--Civil War Book A welcome addition the literature on Emancipation celebrations. It enhances understanding of the diversity of black responses to Emancipation and Jim Crow, and it sheds new light on the roles of gender and religion in formulating African American identity.--Register of Kentucky Historical Society The most complete account to date of Southern black commemorations of the war, emancipation, and Reconstruction.--Civil War History Interesting and enlightening. . . . *Defining Moments* deserves to be widely read.--Arkansas Break[s] new ground in the burgeoning field of American memory studies. . . . Finds success and triumph in a subject that could easily result in disillusionment.--Southern Historian [Clark's] very fine and detailed study explores in depth the development of the southern black commemorative tradition both during the war and in its aftermath.--American Historical Through vivid, evocative stories, Clark charts an ongoing public debate among African Americans about how to narrate their history and define the nature of their progress since Emancipation. The book's high points are its close examinations of people or events that reflect the complexities of this struggle; Clark's

discussions of Augusta's Emancipation Day and of the career of Charles Hunter bring lost worlds to life.--Stephen Kantrowitz, University of Wisconsin-MadisonAn intriguing analysis of African-American celebrations of freedom during the late nineteenth century. . . . A worthy addition to the library of anyone interested in the history of the period.--Georgia Historical QuarterlyThrough skillful analysis, the author offers an interesting and plausible narrative of the role and significance of commemorations.--NC Historical Clark makes effective use of period newspapers, manuscripts, and secondary sources to offer a valuable regional study of an important aspect of postbellum southern political culture. Recommended.--ChoiceDefining Moments is an important work and contributes much to our understanding of black citizenship in the postbellum South. . . . [Clark] adds to our understanding of gender roles, of the significance of history to the black community, of the importance of claiming public spaces for commemorations of any type, and she creatively helps us grasp the difficulty and frustration of advocating for racial progress in a region that sought to thwart any advancement.--Virginia MagazineFrom the Inside FlapIn the first book-length study of African American commemorations in the South following emancipation, Clark shows how traditions such as Emancipation Day created unique opportunities for southern black communities to memorialize slavery and celebrate freedom while also defining themselves collectively and asserting their citizenship after the Civil War.