

**Lane, Roger. *Roots of Violence In Black Philadelphia 1860-1900*.
Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. Pp.v, 174. Index.
\$25.00**

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Volume 17, numéro 2, octobre 1988

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017668ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017668ar>

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Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

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Citer ce compte rendu

Walker, C. E. (1988). Compte rendu de [Lane, Roger. *Roots of Violence In Black Philadelphia 1860-1900*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. Pp.v, 174. Index. \$25.00]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 17(2), 132-132. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017668ar>

undergraduates enrolled in courses in Ontario history. As an adjunct to a course, the book will be useful if the lecturer agrees with Piva about what is important. To me it seems a useful selection. The book is sensibly in paperback. Such volumes help to relieve pressure on library periodical collections, and they should become increasingly popular if changes in the copyright law impose user fees for photocopying.

Bruce S. Elliott
City of Nepean

Lane, Roger. *Roots of Violence In Black Philadelphia 1860-1900*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. Pp.v, 174. Index. \$25.00.

Roots of Violence In Black Philadelphia 1860-1900 is only 174 pages long but it is the best book written in the last decade about the urban experience of black Americans. Containing a number of provocative ideas that have broader applications for the study of black American history, Lane's study makes explicit what was implicit in earlier studies of black urbanization — the structural basis of American racism. Using an approach to the problem of racial inequality in 19th century America that is both unique and exciting, Lane examines the question of black subordination by focusing on crime in Philadelphia during the last four decades of the century. "The history of crime," he writes, "has ignored almost wholly the Afro-American population of the United States." Lane looks to the peculiar circumstances of Negro life in ante bellum America to explain why blacks were more likely than whites to be criminals after the civil war. The 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments made blacks the equals of whites in theory, but not in reality. When viewed from this perspective, the Civil War and Reconstruction constitute a hiatus, not a revolution, in American racial sensibilities.

In Philadelphia between 1860 and 1900 blacks did not share in the city's expanded economic opportunities. "The experience of American blacks is unique in part precisely because they were not merely bypassed but systematically excluded from the urban-industrial revolution, and this exclusion had important effects not only on criminal behavior but also, through criminal behavior on family life, racial leadership, and urban culture in general." Forced to live on the economic margins of society, Philadelphia blacks turned to crime. The criminal subculture blacks were forced to live in because of social and economic discrimination undermined family structure, bred violence, alienated the black middle class from the lower class, and further poisoned race relations. Black crime, in short, reinforced the racism of which it was a product.

Blacks were usually not successful as criminals. Racism prevented them from entering the more lucrative areas of criminal endeavour. White-collar crimes, such as fraud, embezzlement, and forgery, were closed to blacks. For them, Lane says, this "was a direct analogue of the problem of breaking into white collar employment more generally." The petty theft and burglaries black men engaged in were not profitable. Black women, on the other hand, working as domestics or prostitutes were able to steal substantial amounts of cash and other valuables. Whether working legitimately or illegitimately, black women were able to earn more than their men. This state of affairs did nothing for black male self-esteem and most certainly contributed nothing to family stability.

Late 19th century black Philadelphians lived in a violent community. Homicide rates were higher than for any other group in the city of brotherly love. The roots of this violence lay in the political, economic, and social subordination that dominated and shaped black life. In focusing on the origins of black violence and crime, Lane has made a major

contribution to black history. His book criticizes the cultural paradigm that has dominated black history for the past 20 years, arguing that the "emphasis on a distinctive Afro-American tradition has had important results." This mode of analysis has given blacks agency in history, something an earlier generation of American historians denied them. But the importance that many American historians have placed on the strength, resilience, and adaptability of black American culture has caused them to ignore certain problems inherent in this conceptualization of the black past. One of these problems is the corrosive effect that criminal violence had on black culture. Violence in the 19th century vitiated other parts of the black American cultural tradition. In noting this fact, Professor Lane has vindicated the earlier work of W. E. B. Dubois in *The Philadelphia Negro*.

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Hudson, James R. *The Unanticipated City: Loft Conversions in Lower Manhattan*. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987. Pp.xvi, 160. 15 black and white photographs, 2 maps. \$28.95.

Hudson's book on loft conversions in New York City does two things. First, it tells a good story in readable prose about the unofficial transformation of Manhattan's declining manufacturing district - SoHo (South of Houston) district - into an enclave of avant-garde artists in the 1960s and, later, into a trendy haven for the fashionably eccentric. Second, it serves as a useful addition to the field of human ecology in cities.

Artists began occupying the industrial lofts of SoHo as early as the 1940s, and by the early 1970s they had virtually taken over the area. The lofts had many advantages over conventional apartments. The load-bearing