

Call To Freedom 1865 To Present

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Hannah Rosen Stuckey Mary Farmer-Kaiser Georgia Drew Merrill
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Illinois. Military and Naval Department
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May-August, 1883
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the meaning of race in the antebellum southern united states was anchored in the racial exclusivity of slavery coded as black and full citizenship coded as white as well as male these traditional definitions of race were radically disrupted after emancipation when citizenship was granted to all persons born in the united states and suffrage was extended to all men hannah rosen persuasively argues that in this critical moment of reconstruction contests over the future meaning of race were often fought on the terrain of gender sexual violence specifically white on black rape emerged as a critical arena in postemancipation struggles over african american citizenship analyzing the testimony of rape survivors rosen finds that white men often staged elaborate attacks meant to enact prior racial hierarchy through their testimony black women defiantly rejected such hierarchy and claimed their new and equal rights rosen explains how heated debates over interracial marriage were also attempts by whites to undermine african american men s demands for suffrage and a voice in public affairs by connecting histories of rape and discourses of social equality with struggles over citizenship rosen shows how gendered violence and gendered rhetorics of race together produced a climate of terror for black men and women seeking to exercise their new rights as citizens linking political events at the city state and regional levels rosen places gender and sexual violence at the heart of understanding the reconsolidation of race

and racism in the postemancipation united states

established by congress in early 1865 the bureau of refugees freedmen and abandoned lands more commonly known as the freedmen s bureau assumed the herculean task of overseeing the transition from slavery to freedom in the post civil war south although it was called the freedmen s bureau the agency profoundly affected african american women until now remarkably little has been written about the relationship between black women and this federal government agency as mary farmer kaiser clearly demonstrates in this revealing work by failing to recognize freedwomen as active agents of change and overlooking the gendered assumptions at work in bureau efforts scholars have ultimately failed to understand fully the bureau s relationships with freedwomen freedmen and black communities in this pivotal era of american history

frankel s scholarship in this carefully researched and clearly written study is impressive the study is thoroughly documented with 70 pages of footnotes and a 14 page bibliography reflecting frankel s grasp of the secondary literature as well as extensive work in primary documents choice freedom s women examines african american women s experiences during the civil war and early reconstruction years in mississippi exploring issues of family and work the author shows how african american women s attempts to achieve more control over their lives shaped their attitudes toward work marriage family and community

despite their prevailing image and stereotype southern women have often gone beyond convention living on their own terms within a society that revered tradition and compliance spanning the colonial era to the mid twentieth century beyond image and convention documents women from widely varied social economic religious and ethnic backgrounds who acted outside the accepted gender boundaries of their day reflecting the quality and breadth of current scholarship in the field of southern women s history this collection of essays relies upon previously untapped documentary evidence and in the process crafts provocative new interpretations of our collective past the essays explore the historical experience of black and white southern women across nearly three centuries including a white woman s sexual misconduct in colonial north carolina one slave woman s successful attempt to carve out an autonomous existence in southwestern virginia an ex slave s fight for freedom in postbellum missouri and the civil rights activism of two white southern women sarah patton boyle of virginia and alice norwood spearman of south carolina breaking new ground in the study of women s history beyond image and convention provides valuable insights for both specialists and general readers

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