



Lone Star Unionism, Dissent, and Resistance: Other Sides of Civil War Texas ed. Jesús F. de la Teja.

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In *Lone Star Unionism, Dissent, and Resistance*, editor Jesús F. de la Teja (Texas State Univ.) has assembled essays by ten specialists in the history of Texas in the nineteenth century. Their topics are seldom included in popular and scholarly accounts of slavery, dissent and resistance to secession, Confederate control in Texas, and historical memory. Less in evidence here is any discussion of the Civil War itself, understandable since its major campaigns mostly took place far from Texas. The collection highlights Texas's unique position as the only Confederate state with both a large Hispanic population and an international border; as in other southern states, however, its immigrant and disenfranchised populations opposed the Confederacy.

Was secession really a mass movement with broad popular support as the deeply-rooted "Myth of the Lost Cause" would have it? Or did disenfranchised voters and suppressed resisters comprise a majority in antebellum Texas, secession being a conspiracy foisted on the masses by a powerful and well connected oligarchy that took advantage of existing political and legal systems?¹

In his brief introduction, de la Teja contests the popular notion of a "monolithically pro-Confederate Texas" (3). He laments that the positions taken in the volume's essays, "though familiar to academics, somehow were not making it into the public consciousness" (6). Even some academics familiar with such famous episodes of resistance as the Nueces Massacre and the Great Hanging at Gainesville are unaware of the Clarendo massacre and the oppression of resisters in the Big Thicket, whom "Kaiser's Burnout" failed to flush out (87, 123). Many Texans felt that "the Confederate government and the planter class that it represented constituted a larger threat to their independent backwoods way of life than the federal government did," while efforts to quash resistance "undermined some of the very principles the secessionists alleged to be fighting for" (10-11), including protection of individual rights and the freedoms of speech and religion. The articles gathered here were first delivered at a conference hosted by Texas State University in April 2014.

The opening essay, "Gray Ghost," by Laura Lyons McLemore (LSU-Shreveport), concerns the excision of Texans' resistance from popular memory. She argues that Texas's geography and ethnic diversity gave additional force to the constructors of the white, neo-Confederate interpretation. She also contends that the state's postwar prosperity fueled much collective memory-making and monument-building, especially as women moved increasingly into the public sphere in the progressive era (23, 33). Southern "in-migration" also played a part during the postwar period, as did the need to reconstruct a Texan identity given the realities of a large non-white population and growing nationalistic forces. As both a southern and a western state, Texas cultivated ties with the established culture while at the same time asserting its unique identity and rugged individualism. Its Confederate past jibed with the narratives of American separation from Great Britain and Texan independence from Mexico; efforts to commemorate them often blurred lines between the two most recent revolutions. The myth of a uni-

1. See Chris McIlwain, *Civil War Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: U Alabama Pr, 2016).

formly pro-Confederate Texas served postwar agendas and present-day notions of exceptionalism and anti-authoritarianism. It also appealed to the white (bare) majority in a state with a burgeoning non-white population.

In his “The Problem of Slave Flight,” Andrew Torget (Univ. of North Texas) explores the growth of Texas’s African-American population during the war, as slaveholders in other Confederate states removed their slaves to Texas in order to thwart their self-liberation and to secure them from Northern liberators. Texans were in a distinctive position: neither their hostile Comanche neighbors to the west nor Mexico to the south was keen to enforce the Fugitive Slave Law; the Indian Territory to their north and Louisiana to the east increasingly came under federal control as the war progressed. Texas experienced growing numbers of “refugeed slaves” and saw its local militias and slave patrols depleted by the Confederacy’s insatiable appetite for manpower. This led to a desire to fight the war in neighboring states and territories—“fighting them there so we don’t have to fight them here.” Torget’s claim that “no Union invasion ever took place” (56) ignores the extensive occupation of the Texas coast and Rio Grande valley.² Ultimately, the war destabilized slavery in Texas and the society that depended on it, undermining slaveholders’ propaganda about “happy slaves” and forcing their recognition of a society free of the stain of slavery.

The well researched, engaging essay “Involuntary Removals,” by W. Caleb McDaniel (Rice Univ.), investigates the experience of “refugeed slaves” uprooted in the midst of war to unfamiliar surroundings far from their homes and families: “no group of Southerners prayed for Union victory, or helped it along more fervently than the enslaved; no consideration of Southern ‘Unionists’ can be complete without them” (60). McDaniel properly expands the definition of “Unionism” to embrace not only white freeholders, but “freedmen” who served in the same Union army yet remain segregated in works on the black experience of the war.³

Victoria Bynum (Texas State Univ.), in “East Texas Unionism,” reveals parallels between the Piney Woods Unionists in Mississippi and their counterparts in Texas.⁴ In both places, kinship was critical: many of the Texas Unionists in the Big Thicket were related to those in Jones County; some of them even reunited in Texas after the war. Putting a face on a previously nameless group, Bynum tells the story of Warren Collins, whose descendants’ denials and obfuscations of his wartime activities form a case study of modern Texas Civil War collective memory. Collins’s proto-populism, she writes, represents a distinct strain of Southern political thought. Huey Long, for example, who came from a Unionist community in Winn Parish, Louisiana (94), railed against his state’s oil companies, while Collins’s villains were the local “lumber barons” who threatened his community. Opposition to these large concerns was foreshadowed by an earlier “political recognition that slave-based Southern commerce, empowered by the new Confederate government, threatened that way of life more than did the federal government” (90), foreshadowing the later opposition to corporations and governments that threatened to remake the world of the backwoods yeomanry. Slaveowners had to vilify the federal government for fear it would favor the interests of small producers, an outcome they delayed until the New Deal.

2. See Stephen Dupree, *Planting the Union Flag in Texas* (College Station: Texas A&M U Pr, 2008).

3. See Matthew J. Clavin, *Aiming for Pensacola: Fugitive Slaves on the Atlantic and Southern Frontiers* (Cambridge: Harvard U Pr, 2015) and the popular film *Free State of Jones* (2016; dir. Gary Ross), which feature the overlooked or elided role of biracial cooperation in undermining the Confederacy.

4. Her book *The Free State of Jones: Mississippi’s Longest Civil War* (Chapel Hill: U North Carolina Pr, 2001) inspired the film of the same title.

Walter Kamphoefner (Texas A&M) in “New Americans or New Southerners?” disputes revisionist characterizations of Texas’s German immigrants, like those in New Orleans and St. Louis, as loyal Confederates or doing just enough to avoid appearing to be a disloyal minority on the Confederate frontier. His discussion of Missouri Unionists sheds light as well on claims of Texan exceptionalism: German immigrants in both states had very similar views on the twin evils of slavery and war, and for the same reasons. Texas Germans resembled their compatriots elsewhere in the Confederacy and across the nation, despite their descendants’ efforts to rewrite their history.

In “Although We Are the Last Soldiers,” Omar Valerio-Jiminez (Univ. of Texas–San Antonio) offers a welcome reassessment of Unionism among Texas’s Hispanos. Moving beyond purely class-based or ethnic explanations, he argues that Tejanos grasped the ideological bases of the Civil War and believed their interests would be best served by the Union, not the elitist cattle-baronetcy emerging in the region. Tejanos joined the Union Army in large numbers, as did residents of New Mexico, despite the federal government’s forcible annexation of their homes only decades before. Valerio-Jiminez contests the findings in Jerry D. Thompson’s work⁵ on Tejano Union soldiers.⁶ His more nuanced discussion identifies a variety of reasons why Mexican-American Texans so forcefully resisted slave-owners in their state, while sympathizing with escaped slaves, including some formerly owned by Sam Houston. Indeed, Tejanos, like blacks, joined the Union Army in hopes of gaining fuller US citizenship status (140).

The excellent essay by Richard McCaslin (Univ. of North Texas)—“A Texas Reign of Terror”—reflects a lifetime of studying Texan history, particularly anti-Unionist violence in northern Texas. He shows that suppression of anti-Confederate sentiment went far beyond the notorious Gainesville hangings, permeating economic and religious life in the region. Efforts to resist secessionist organization by boycotting extra-legal conventions failed, but secessionists never completely controlled the region during the war. Resisters, deserters, and outliers dominated Texas’s northern counties, complicating Southern operations in the Indian Territory. Moreover, conscription and the hated tax-in-kind pushed many residents into the anti-Confederate camp. McCaslin’s compelling treatment of the extreme measures secessionists took to achieve their goals makes one wonder just how the debate might have played out under a more democratic and tolerant regime.

“In Defense of Their Families,” by Rebecca Czuchry (Texas Lutheran Univ.), concerns the terrible suffering of African-American women in postwar Texas society in the face of virulent race- and gender-bias. (Her acute critique of idealized interpretations of “freedom” is at odds with the volume’s next essay, on Juneteenth commemorations.) Czuchry shows that white men’s sexual abuse of black women, under the guise of “population control,” served to emasculate black men; she draws parallels with similar behavior in the vicious Balkan conflict of the 1990s (183, 187). She observes that, although not all resistance succeeded, its legacy had meaningful repercussions in the years that followed.

Elizabeth Turner (Univ. of North Texas), in “Three Cheers to Freedom and Equal Rights to All,” discusses the “Juneteenth” celebrations as enduring memorials of resistance and emancipation that forced white Texans to concede access to public spaces during annual commemorations (213). Her concentration on the immediate postwar era is salutary, given that most accounts of the period break off shortly after the last puffs of gunsmoke have drifted away. Federal troops, including black and white southern Unionists, took steps to ensure that the initial commemorations became fixtures in the black community’s and eventually the entire state’s annual calendar.

5. *Mexican Texans in the Union Army* (El Paso: Texas Western Pr, 1986).

6. This may account for Thompson’s absence from the anthology.

In the volume's final essay, "Edmund J. Davis—Unlikely Radical," Carl Moneyhon (Univ. of Arkansas) condenses his broader work⁷ on a noted prewar southern politician, wartime commander of the First (Union) Texas Cavalry, and reconstruction-era governor. Davis's transition from southern Democrat to conditional Unionist, outright Unionist, and eventually radical Republican proves that some southerners were able to see through extra-legal constitutional violations and resist the siren-song of rebellion and ruin (234, 246). Despite claims about their chivalry, Confederates persecuted Davis's family, earning the future governor's everlasting enmity.

Lone Star Unionism, Dissent, and Resistance achieves its authors' goal of telling a more complete story of the course and consequences of the Civil War in Texas;⁸ it has already become a valuable resource for students of the period and for scholars seeking corrections of persistent misconceptions.⁹

7. *Edmund J. Davis of Texas: Civil War General, Republican Leader, Reconstruction Governor* (Fort Worth: TCU Pr, 2010).

8. It nicely complements Robert and Ralph Wooster, ed., *Lone Star Blue and Gray* (Austin: Texas State Hist. Assoc., 1996).

9. The only notable omission is an account of Texas Unionists' military service and wartime experiences, but works on that subject, though dated, are generally available. See, e.g., Frank Smyrl, "Texans in the Union Army, 1861-1865," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 65 (1961) 234-50, rpt. in Wooster (ibid.); Jerry D. Thompson, *Vaqueros in Blue and Gray: Mexican Texans in the Union Army* (El Paso: Texas Western U Pr, 1986); and Christopher Rein, "Trans-Mississippi Southerners in the Union Army, 1862-1865" (LSU master's thesis, 2001) 56-79 - www.miwsr.com/rd/1704.htm.