

William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America

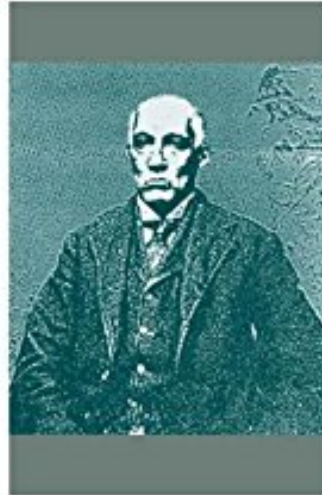
Roger Lane

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Roger Lane : William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America
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Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America:

Lane here illuminates the African-American experience through a close look at a single city, once the metropolitan headquarters of black America, now typical of many. He recognizes that urban history offers more clues, both to modern accomplishments and to modern problems, than the dead past of rural slavery. The book's historical section is based on hundreds of newly discovered scrapbooks kept by William Henry Dorsey, Philadelphia's first black historian. These provide an intimate and comprehensive view of the critical period between the Civil War and about 1900, when African-Americans, formally free and increasingly urban, made the biggest educational and occupational gains in history. Dorsey's tens of thousands of newspaper clippings and other sources, detail records of high culture and low, success and scandal, personal and public life. In the final chapters Lane outlines the urban situation today, the strong parallels between past and present that suggest the power of continuity and the equally strong differences that point to the possibility of change.

"Roger Lane's book joins the best studies of Black urban history of the past generation....Lane's tour de force is penetrating....must reading for historians and policy makers genuinely concerned about racial justice."--The Historian
"A finely drawn portrait of black Philadelphia....Always informed, generally sympathetic and...insightful."--New York Times Book
"A major work and among the most detailed and comprehensive studies of an urban black community ever undertaken. For that, historians and others will be grateful."--Philadelphia Inquirer
"A comprehensive, insightful and clearly written chronicle of black life in this city."--Philadelphia
"An insightful reexamination of Afro-American life in post reconstructionist Philadelphia."--History: s of New Books
"No short review can do justice to the many subtle observations Lane makes about blacks in politics, religion, education, or wherever....[An] extraordinary achievement....Lane gives us much more than a history."--Pennsylvania Magazine
"In this moving and profound work, Roger Lane has shown us all how William Dorsey's Philadelphia is ours, a task of historical imagination and courage. Lane demonstrates to us the differences between Dorsey's world and the urban world we now inhabit, yet in so doing he makes us realize that this world has shaped and influenced our world, no matter who we are or where we live. To think carefully about race and racial difference is one of the greatest challenges of our age, and Lane, in opening himself to learning from William Dorsey, helps us to learn. The two, Lane and Dorsey, enable us to see in human differences, human ties. A great achievement."--Eric H. Monkkonen, University of California, Los Angeles
"At once, uncompromising, incisive, and provocative, Lane's book is an important contribution to our understanding of America's most pressing social problem."--Elijah Anderson, University of Pennsylvania
"[P]rovocative, nuanced, and rich....a fine contribution to our understanding of the subject....offers a detailed and highly perceptive discussion of black urban culture."--Labor History
"Lane paints one of the most textured pictures we have of an African-American community."--Journal of Social History
"[One of] the most ambitious, detailed, and provocative analyses of urban northern postbellum black life in print."-- s in American History
"This book is a significant addition to the historical literature on urban and African-American history. It is also a timely source for those struggling to understand and overcome the impact of...earlier injustices."--American Historical
"Lane has written a big, bounteous, and brave book....This book will figure prominently in discussions of modern African-American history for years. Few are the historians who research as deeply, analyze as deftly, and write as lucidly as Lane....Excellent as history, his book also cuts through much of the rhetoric and facile solutions emanating from today's policymakers and political pundits."--Journal of Interdisciplinary History
From the Back Cover
In the crucial decades after the Civil War, Philadelphia was the archetypical city for African-Americans. Not only did it have the largest African-American population in actual numbers, but it was also the preferred destination in the North for blacks migrating from the South after the Civil War. A host of national and even international institutions, churches, lodges and newspapers tied the black leadership together--especially the Grand and United Order of Odd Fellows and the African Methodist Episcopal Church.
About the Author
Roger Lane is at Haverford College.