

debates of the late 1970s and early 1980s closely and that she felt strongly enough in 1979 to write a letter to each of the premiers, but about what that letter might have said the reader can only speculate. As for religion, it is evident that Ida devoted considerable time to the activities of the Baptist church and that it was a key part of her social world. As to her theological ideas though, insofar as they may have been distinct from Maritime Baptists in general, the diary seems to have been silent. There are exceptions: clearly, she was not impressed with the Pentecostal services she attended after AR joined that denomination later in life (85-86), but what he found appealing about this faith (or why he developed an interest in church at all after showing no inclination to do so earlier in his married life) remains elusive.

On the events and happenings of Ida's life, though, the diaries are a remarkable record, and the authors nicely illuminate the patterns of sociability, of leisure activities, of relationships within and across generations to give the reader an insight into working-class family life in the postwar decades. The final substantive chapter that focuses on Ida's widowhood and old age is particularly insightful as the diary is mined for what it can tell us about how people like Ida navigated life without their spouse, contending with ill health and physical limitations, and how they developed new and different relationships both with their own family members and with other kinds of caregivers.

This book, on the whole, is a pleasure to read and through its pages one comes to care about Ida Martin and to appreciate the significance of the record she kept of what was, in many ways, an ordinary working-class life. The chapters are concise, as is the book, and this as well as the thematic organization make it an excellent potential text for undergraduate teaching in social, gender, and

20th-century history courses. If, unlike *The Midwife's Tale*, *The Usual Work* does not require a fundamental rethinking of much of the historiography of its period of study, it is nevertheless a useful supplement and a reminder that many patterns of working-class life were continuous with earlier eras amidst the considerable technological, economic, and social changes of the postwar decades.

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Kim Kelly, *Fight Like Hell: The Untold Story of American Labor* (New York: One Signal Publishers/Atria, 2022)

WE DEFINITELY NEED more books like Kim Kelly's lively *Fight Like Hell: The Untold Story of American Labor* circulating in the public sphere as both information and inspiration. At the same time, we also need critical discussion of the presentation and interpretation of labour history in popular, journalistic sites like her monograph.

Kelly, an American journalist and organizer, came to this project an experienced reporter of contemporary labour issues: she has written pro-union movement stories focused on the United States in both the online and print press. Her magazine writing in *Teen Vogue*, for instance, is a refreshing appeal to younger readers that dives into everything from 'union friendly' Christmas gifts to industrial disasters. This book goes far beyond her existing writing, offering an overview of US labour movement history in a readable, engaging, and compelling manner. Kelly makes good on efforts to favour labour movement rather than trade union history, and to eschew stories that privilege white men. The book thoroughly integrates, indeed often gives priority to, women, racialized and gender non-conforming workers as well as

recent immigrants. In many ways, this echoes the pathways of academic labour history in the last few decades as gender, race, and sexuality have become central to our writing. Similarly, Kelly uses many of the dominant theoretical assumptions of our time – intersectionality and racial capitalism for instance – though usually without debate or reflection.

Kelly's approach is established in the opening chapter, "The Trailblazers," in which she focuses on two 19th century stories: the mill girls of Lowell, Massachusetts and the free Black washerwomen of Jackson, Mississippi. Thereafter, her chapters are not chronological but thematic, taking in groups of workers defined by the kind of work they do – garment workers, mill workers, miners, metal workers – and so on. She acknowledges she could not cover all categories, but she offers an innovative means of grouping workers, even rather unlikely combinations. For example, the chapter on Movers encompasses short sections on drivers, dockworkers, Coors brewery workers (during a historic strike), longshoremen, cooks and steward on ships, queer truck drivers and airline workers, especially flight attendants. Some chapters combine occupational and thematic approaches: "Freedom Fighters" integrates discussion of post Civil War sharecroppers, Pullman porters (and Pullman maids, often ignored) civil rights, and individuals like Bernard Rustin, while her chapter on "Disability" reaches back to 18th century disabled Quaker abolitionist Benjamin Lay and includes circus workers, occupational mine accidents, a group of disabled Black Panthers, ending with current problems with the minimum wage. The reach is quite astounding. Kelly tries to integrate discussion of coerced and unwaged labour, and her focus also goes beyond what some might see as more 'traditional'

wage-earning: her excellent chapter on prison labour is one good example.

There are obvious risks to a thematic approach. Kelly jumps across decades and centuries in each chapter so that context can get lost. It is difficult to discuss at any length the structural, political, and cultural forces shaping such different struggles and organizing in a journalistic book encompassing so many diverse stories. A less talented writer than Kelly might have floundered, but her strength is her ability to draw parallels and connections across time and occupations, and to do so in a way that does not stray from her emphasis on the labour-capital divide, though always focusing on gender, race, migrant status, and sexuality. Kelly makes an effort to avoid judgemental presentism, providing context to her historical actors, but she does sometimes slip into present-day assumptions: she suggests, for instance, that anarchist Lucy Parsons should have embraced her "blackness" more than her single-minded stress on class which "clouded her perception of the working class." (64)

The thread running through the volume is resistance and the potential power of working-class solidarity and action, and this also helps to tie the book together. Kelly is adept at introducing the compelling stories of less well-known struggles and individuals; many people are aware of farm worker organizers Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta (the latter after a recent documentary), however in the chapter on "Harvesters," she introduces us to Filipino organizer Larry Itliong and a Yemen-born immigrant organizer and anti-imperialist Nagi Daifullah who was killed by Seattle police. Indeed, Kelly deals head on with questions of brute power and the violence used against workers, as well as the myriad of laws, policies, and practices that favour capital over labour: it is always clear 'which side she is on.'

At the same time, her celebration of all forms of resistance over time sometimes imparts a somewhat skewed view of labour history, particularly when it comes to the organized left. As a member of the Industrial Workers of the World's Freelance Journalist Union, Kelly gives Wobbly history considerable attention, but their impact was highly temporal; it did not stretch evenly over the 20th century. There is no entry for "Communist Party" in the index and it is only rarely mentioned, though more often, people are identified as "communists," particularly if they ran up against repressive red scares and McCarthyism (though Kelly simplifies the CIO's response to the anti-communism of Taft Hartley, one example of the pitfalls of glossing over such histories in a couple of sentences.) (188) One would not come away from the book knowing – to take one example -- that industrial unions in the CIO were built by disciplined cadres of Marxist-Leninists from communist parties. If we want inspiration about working-class struggles, in other words, this book is the place to go; if we want more discussion of labour movement strategy over time, including its relationship to the Left, we need something more.

Kelly's talent for captivating story telling is most definitely what makes this book unique and an excellent introduction to those without any knowledge of US labour history. Hopefully, it will become the 'gateway' enticement to their further engagement with working-class histories, including academic writing. This is also where discussion is needed. Kelly's writing benefited from the rich, extensive writing on labour, race, and gender of the last four decades or more, and to her credit, Kelly states her debt to labour historians in her introduction, even though the book is advertised rather ostentatiously as the "untold" story of American labour. Scattered throughout

the book are references to some of the authors she uses, but without extensive footnotes (which I agree are not a good idea in a popular book), she can't cite all her academic sources. There is a useful list of references at the end, though it is weighted towards online sources.

Popular and academic writing have somewhat different aims and approaches, though I think we may exaggerate the gap separating these genres, seeing one as great story telling and the other as lengthy tomes. A kerfuffle arose in the US over a newspaper excerpt taken from the book in which Kelly discusses the struggles of Black washerwomen. The newspaper edited out her reference to Princeton historian Tera Hunter whose work was clearly the source for this section. Kelly apologized profusely and corrected the error, though that was not sufficient for some commentators who saw this as an issue of race and the privileging of a white voice.

The question of popular versus academic history and the relationship between the two is a discussion worth continuing. How different are these genres, and indeed our aims of making history available and accessible? How should these two groups acknowledge and use each others work? How can we take the nuances that often are important to academic history and share them in compelling ways in popular writing? How can we ensure that labour struggles are understood within their distinct historical contexts yet also offer reflective critique at the same time? These and other questions are relevant to all researchers, teachers, and journalists who share Kelly's resolve to make working-class histories far more central to the narrative of American history.

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