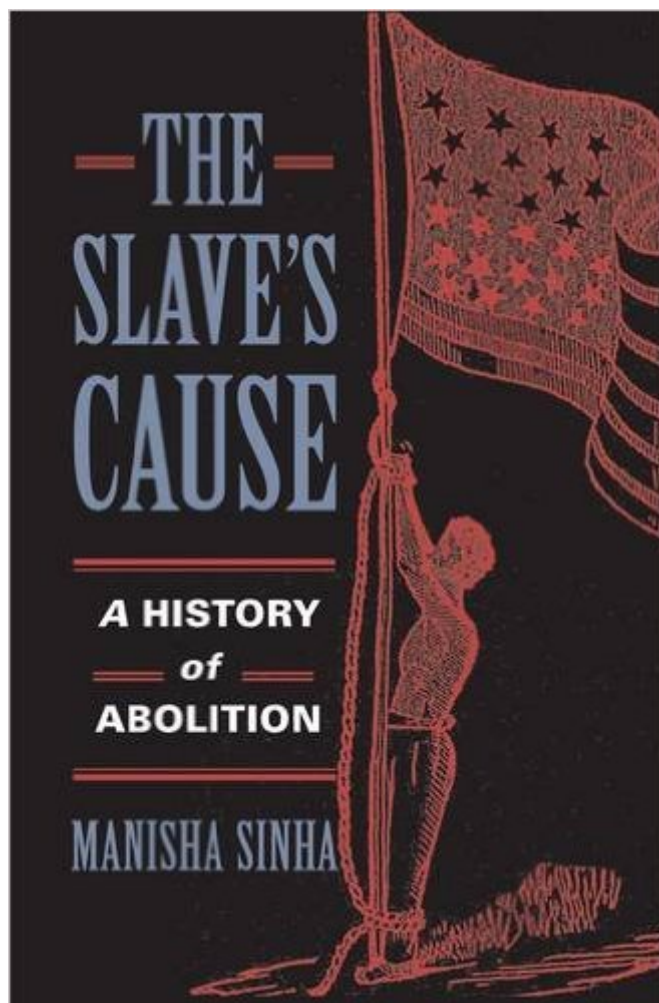


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The Slave's Cause: A History Of Abolition



Synopsis

A groundbreaking history of abolition that recovers the largely forgotten role of African Americans in the long march toward emancipation from the American Revolution through the Civil War. Received historical wisdom casts abolitionists as bourgeois, mostly white reformers burdened by racial paternalism and economic conservatism. Manisha Sinha overturns this image, broadening her scope beyond the antebellum period usually associated with abolitionism and recasting it as a radical social movement in which men and women, black and white, free and enslaved found common ground in causes ranging from feminism and utopian socialism to anti-imperialism and efforts to defend the rights of labor. Drawing on extensive archival research, including newly discovered letters and pamphlets, Sinha documents the influence of the Haitian Revolution and the centrality of slave resistance in shaping the ideology and tactics of abolition. This book is a comprehensive new history of the abolition movement in a transnational context. It illustrates how the abolitionist vision ultimately linked the slave's cause to the struggle to redefine American democracy and human rights across the globe.

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Customer Reviews

Sinha's book is a monumental achievement in the history of abolition. Not only does she cover an incredible amount of material, and make important interventions in the field, but does so in a way that is readable and approachable. This book is a treasure trove of material and should be read by all those interested in, or studying, slavery and abolition!

Dr. Sinha delves into the history of the Abolitionist movement in a way that redefines the narratives concerning its political, social, and cultural importance. Her exhaustive primary source research, and penetrating analysis, makes this a major work on the subject, and positions Dr. Sinha as Abolitionism's forefront expert. Every book written about this topic for the next two decades, or more, will be responding to this work. Specifically, Dr. Sinha's work has done much to recenter black intellectuals and activists as central players in this epic political and cultural drama. She conclusively demonstrates that it was they who set the agenda, that the movement thrived through their work and leadership, and that previous narratives of Abolitionism as a movement of white bourgeois reformers and dilettantes are based on incomplete readings of the archives. Dr. Sinha has presented us with a powerful, relevant, and beautifully written work important to expanding our understanding of how black and white allies can work together in common cause. In this case, the slave's cause.

The content and accuracy of this book is astounding. While reading the preface I thought the book was going to be written entirely in an academic style. However, the author draws you in with her narrative writing style making this portion of our nation's history very interesting. Even riveting at times. I haven't finished it yet but I am enjoying the journey.

The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition by Manisha Sinha published by Yale University Press (2016) is a book that many of us have been awaiting for years. This is a marvelous history of the Abolitionist Movement from the 1600s to the Civil War. It places African Americans at the center of the movement, both as activists and thinkers. Immigrant contributions to the movement receive very good treatment, and the efforts of the German abolitionists are rescued from obscurity. My one problem with the book is Sinha's presentation of the white native-born abolitionists as supporters of immigrant rights. In fact, many immigrants were suspicious of the New England abolitionists, sometimes with good reason. The political abolitionists grouped around the Liberty Party endorsed the Nativist proposition that naturalized immigrants be prevented from voting for years after they became citizens. This would have effectively disenfranchised most immigrants and destroyed the power of immigrant communities. Should we be surprised that even anti-slavery immigrants were uncomfortable with the intolerance of some abolition leaders?

This is a comprehensive and probably definitive book about the abolition movement's long but ultimately successful effort to end slavery. Dr. Sinha has done a remarkable job here in detailing the

widespread efforts to end slavery. It is impossible to read this book and persist in thinking that slavery was seen as normal and morally right, even where it existed. The book may be too dense for some readers, and seems pegged at a graduate level history student, but it is well worth the effort. Dr. Sinha also sets the record straight about the abolition movement being driven largely, though not exclusively by black men and women. The movement was not about black soldiers being directed by white leaders. Abolition wasn't Garrison's idea, and it certainly wasn't Lincoln's. Another achievement of this book is making a record of a protest movement, which it occurred to me in reading this, must be significantly harder than tracing the history a nation state. This is a remarkable and unique book.

A dense but essential history of the abolition movement which demonstrates the depth and breadth of this movement. A useful corrective to those who have said that slavery was "generally accepted" in the antebellum period, and that current critiques of slavery are "imposing contemporary standards" on an earlier period of history. Many many people in that time knew the immorality of slavery, its cruelty and oppression...even those who enslaved others...like Jefferson, who acknowledged this even while inflicting cruelty and oppression on the children he fathered...Massively researched and powerful.

This book is a comprehensive history of abolition. As such, it is difficult for me to read, not because it is not well written, which it is, but because it is so comprehensive that I have trouble reading it in long stretches. It is taking me awhile to get through the book. I can't possibly remember all the dates/names/places, but I am getting a feel for the abolition movement.

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