

Helping Others, Helping Ourselves: Power, Giving and Community Identity in Cleveland, Ohio, 1880-1930. By Laura Tuennerman-Kaplan. (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2001. 222 pp. Paper, \$29.00, ISBN 0-87338-711-2.)

Until the New Deal era, much social support in the U.S. came through private philanthropy. In considering the means and ends of such private philanthropy, historians have explored “top-down” philanthropy whereby wealthy Americans gave funds and endowed non-profit organizations to shape society in particular ways. When Andrew Carnegie, for example, chose to finance public libraries he was not merely expressing a benign belief in the power of reading. He gave his money to support his idea that the less fortunate should not be provided direct aid, but rather given the indirect means by which they could choose to help themselves. For Carnegie and other wealthy philanthropists, thus, giving was a way to control other groups in the U.S.

In *Helping Others, Helping Ourselves*, Laura Tuennerman-Kaplan has written a social analysis of philanthropy that moves beyond this top-down approach by shifting from philanthropy of the wealthy to that of more “ordinary” people in Cleveland and asking how and why they chose to give to others within their community. She admits that such philanthropy too was an exercise in power, but insists that the “giving” of more ordinary people was rooted in their sense of belonging to Cleveland and that patterns of giving reveal “a social relation, one that both reflected and shaped society” (150). In her Introduction and Chapter 1, Tuennerman-Kaplan explains that her “bottom-up” investigation of Cleveland’s giving patterns will illustrate philanthropy as “an embedded social relation” that exposes “networks of givers and receivers” who were “working in interrelated ways to provide the goods and services necessary in life” within the city (23). Her next three chapters trace out these ideas by presenting a broad overview of giving in Cleveland from early charitable endeavors to the more systematic, progressive-era models of philanthropy. Chapter 2 examines the pre- to immediate post-Civil War efforts that were primarily voluntaristic, generally motivated by religion, and practiced heavily by women. Private welfare institutions such as the Protestant Orphan Asylum and St. Mary’s and St. Vincent’s Orphan Asylums, for example, were permanent representations of such efforts. Chapter 3 explores the historical shift from voluntarism to the more centralized activities that characterized the Progressive Era when elite families such as the Rockefellers endowed charitable foundations; and organizations such as the City Federation of Women’s Clubs (1902) were founded to “coordinate the educational, civic, and welfare activities of women’s clubs throughout the city” (47). Both kinds of activities, she argues, were distinct from earlier giving efforts, and both represented attempts of an expanding socio-economic elite to control and order the city to suit their values as new immigrants poured into it (51). Chapter 4, on the other hand, shows how ethnicity, gender, and religious orientation

caused other Clevelanders simultaneously to found an array of church societies, fraternal orders, and self-improvement clubs. The money and time members gave to these organizations were, in the author's analysis, a means to build community networks, "to create and maintain social relationships" that would in turn reinforce "specific community identities based on class, gender, race, ethnicity, and religion" (81).

This last analysis provides the springboard for the final two chapters that are case studies of African American and Italian American communities aimed at showing how the giving patterns reveal how each group viewed itself and how it shaped its own social world. According to Tuennerman-Kaplan, African American giving efforts were more numerous and organized. African Americans, perhaps because of pervasive racism, developed many institutions to help themselves. Churches drew congregants into a network of social relationships with the implicit, and at times explicit, obligation to care for one another. Church Aid and Pastor's Aid Societies were prominent features of many African American churches such as St. John's AME and Shiloh Baptist; Cory Methodist Church had seven aid societies. Along with congregant-oriented giving, church societies reached out to give aid across the community and church leaders came together to pursue issues of common concern to all African Americans residents. Fraternal orders, sisterhoods, burial societies, and other mutual aid organizations also served as community giving networks. Through this aid network, African Americans in Cleveland thus met many of their own needs for "social services, for spiritual enrichment, for culture, and for information" (123).

Italian American immigrants, on the other hand, did not develop such networks until the later years of this study because they tended to band together according to their region of origin in Italy. Not perceiving of themselves as Italians with common interests and concerns, they were far less inclined than African Americans to form community network of givers. Yet, here too, Tuennerman-Kaplan argues, a social analysis of giving practices demonstrates how a group exercises power. In this case, by refusing to become aid recipients, Italian Americans were choosing "social and cultural independence" (128), and in forming only certain kinds of mutual aid societies – such as the Società Gildonese or the Fratellanza Siciliana – they were choosing to maintain their older village identities.

As a social history of philanthropy within a community, this book will certainly interest contemporary Cleveland residents as it explains the existence and persistence of certain charitable institutions in the city. It also suggests new ground for future historians trying to understand how groups of people perceive themselves, their place in a locale, and how they attempted to control their own lives in a society that has generally left giving and taking care of others to individuals rather than seeing it as the responsibility of the State. Consideration of this last element, however, is missing from the book. More attention needs to be paid to how the failure of the American State to provide social services helped create the patterns of giving that this book explores for Cleveland before a broader social analysis of giving can be made. Tuennerman-Kaplan's book provides a good starting point for this larger consideration of the

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intersection of state and society in determining how and why groups of Americans chose to give, to receive, or to reject the offerings of others.

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