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*Water Tossing Boulders: How a Family of Chinese Immigrants
Led the First Fight to Desegregate Schools in the Jim Crow
South* by Adrienne Berard (review)

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disproportionate racial effects in the present day. Further, she has shown how socioeconomic class also was an impetus to deny the vote to poorer white people. Her book is essential reading.

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Water Tossing Boulders: How a Family of Chinese Immigrants Led the First Fight to Desegregate Schools in the Jim Crow South. By Adrienne Berard. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016. Pp. xiv, 194. Paper, \$18.00, ISBN 978-0-8070-8316-1; cloth, \$26.95, ISBN 978-0-8070-3353-1.)

Adrienne Berard's *Water Tossing Boulders: How a Family of Chinese Immigrants Led the First Fight to Desegregate Schools in the Jim Crow South* focuses on how the Lums, a Chinese family, struggled to survive economically and psychologically in Mississippi during the 1910s and 1920s. Berard, a journalist who adopts a creative nonfiction style, effectively argues that the Lum family struggled to maintain degrees of whiteness in an ever-changing milieu where they were neither white nor black.

Part 1 outlines how Jeu Gong Lum lived in fear after leaving China and entering the United States illegally by way of Canada in 1904. Lum made his way to Mississippi, where he found employment and married Katherine Wong, another Chinese immigrant, in 1913. The Lums had three children, including the academically talented Martha. They owned a successful grocery store in Benoit, Mississippi, which they decided to sell in 1919, before moving to Rosedale, Mississippi, and opening a store in 1923. Due to changing policies in Rosedale, the Lum children were barred from attending the white school in 1924. Katherine Lum refused to send her children to the black school, and, knowing the possible risks to her family, she decided to sue.

Part 2 mostly focuses on the Lum family's legal battles. Earl Brewer, a former Mississippi governor with a record of challenging the status quo, represented the Lums and built a case around Martha Lum. In November 1924 William A. Alcorn, a local judge, ordered school officials to admit Martha Lum; the decision was quickly overturned by the Mississippi Supreme Court. Frustrated and disappointed, Katherine Lum sent her children to Michigan to live with their uncle, while Earl Brewer prepared to appeal to the Supreme Court of the United States. Because Brewer took on other cases, he handed the Lum family's lawsuit to James Flowers, an attorney and segregationist. Flowers abandoned the case, which resulted in the U.S. Supreme Court reaching its decision without anyone present to represent Martha Lum. With its verdict in *Lum v. Rice* (1927), the Supreme Court codified the exclusion of Chinese individuals from white schools.

Beginning with its unintelligible title, *Water Tossing Boulders* has numerous problems and inaccuracies. Berard's assertion that a Chinese family started the first struggle for school desegregation is impossible. The Lums did not fight for desegregation; they fought for whiteness. The Supreme Court heard the first challenge to public school segregation in *Cumming v. Richmond County Board of Education* (1899)—the plaintiffs in the *Cumming* case were black—almost thirty years before *Lum*. Berard also effectively erases the everyday agency, or

hidden transcripts, of all nonwhite people in the South. The author's sources mostly consist of dated secondary sources and a small handful of oral histories; interestingly, Martha Lum's voice is completely absent. Other problems include Berard's simplistic explanations for complex processes. According to the author, Martha Lum threatened "the very structure of Southern society," but her lawsuit ended up making "the enemy stronger" (pp. 41, 139). Berard also argues that segregation may have been overturned if only Earl Brewer had kept the case. While explanations about Flowers's actions are minimal, Berard's interpretations include racism. Stylistically, the author's account is frustratingly unorganized and unfocused. There is more very loosely related background information about various towns, laws, individuals, and legacies of the Civil War, for example, than details about the Lum family and their legal battles. Many questions remain unanswered.

While Berard does not engage with recent literature, her work fits recent historiographical efforts to expose the inadequacies of the black/white binary, to trace civil rights struggles before the 1950s and 1960s, and to give voice to numerous minority groups while recognizing how they fought for civil rights. Berard depicts a complex Mississippi, one that had a sizable Chinese population and had people, including white people, willing to dismantle aspects of segregation.

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Depression Folk: Grassroots Music and Left-Wing Politics in 1930s America.

By Ronald D. Cohen. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016. Pp. [viii], 201. Paper, \$27.95, ISBN 978-1-4696-2881-3; cloth, \$85.00, ISBN 978-1-4696-3046-5.)

Ronald D. Cohen has an encyclopedic knowledge of twentieth-century folk music in the United States. His great output of writing on the subject, especially what is arguably his best work, *Rainbow Quest: The Folk Music Revival and American Society, 1940–1970* (Amherst, Mass., 2002), already gives credence to his expertise in and commitment to this subject. Perhaps due to his past emphasis on the post-Depression years, Cohen has gone back to the era when left-wing politics and folk music were first joined through the efforts of many individuals and groups, including the federal government to some degree.

In the introduction to *Depression Folk: Grassroots Music and Left-Wing Politics in 1930s America*, Cohen states that he counts grassroots, vernacular, and even commercial compositions as folk music, and he pledges to investigate a broad range of genres and artists, such as "hillbilly (country) songs, rural blues, spirituals, cowboy songs, western swing, ethnic music and performers, singer-songwriters, labor songsters, and various others" (p. 5). In particular, he vows to "highlight the complex role that folk music and musicians, collectors and promoters, record companies and others, played during the decade" and to explore "the clash between capitalism and the emerging grassroots proletarian movements" (p. 6). Certainly, this spectrum of music and the author's commitment to historically and politically examining it offers much potential. Unfortunately, the book's organization and emphases work against its stated purpose.