Imagining the African American West (Race and Ethnicity in the American West)

Blake Allmendinger

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Imagining the African American West (Race and Ethnicity in the American West) Blake Allmendinger The literature of the African American West is the last racial discourse of the region that remains unexplored. Blake Allmendinger addresses this void in literary and cultural studies with *Imagining the African American West*—the first comprehensive study of African American literature on the early frontier and in the modern urban American West.

Allmendinger charts the terrain of African American literature in the West through his exploration of novels, histories, autobiographies, science fiction, mysteries, formula westerns, melodramas, experimental theater, and political essays, as well as rap music and film. He examines the histories of James P. Beckwourth and Oscar Micheaux; slavery, the Civil War, and the significance of the American frontier to blacks; and the Harlem Renaissance, the literature of urban unrest, rap music, black noir, and African American writers, including Toni Morrison and Walter Mosley. His study utilizes not only the works of well-known African American writers but also some obscure and neglected works, out-of-print books, and unpublished manuscripts in library archives.

Much of the scholarly neglect of the "Black West" can be blamed on how the American West has been imagined, constructed, and framed in scholarship to date. In his study, Allmendinger provides the appropriate theoretical, cultural, and historical contexts for understanding the literature and suggests new directions for the future of black western literature.

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