Brandon R. Byrd, *The Black Republic: African Americans and the Fate of Haiti*.

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019. xi + 297 pp. (Cloth US\$39.95)

In *The Black Republic*, Brandon Byrd fills an important gap in the literature on relations between the United States and Haiti by focusing on the views of prominent African American intellectuals and public figures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the policies they advocated to “uplift” Haiti from its backwardness. Among the most well-known African Americans of the times whose views he considered are those of William Wells Brown, Benjamin Tucker Tanner, John Mercer Langston, Loudon S. Langley, Ebenezer Don Carlos Bassett, Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. Du Bois.

For many of these African Americans, Haiti held a special place as a symbol of Black freedom and self-determination stemming from its singular and epochal slave revolution that led to the creation of the second independent republic in the New World. Yet many of them also thought that Haiti had failed to embrace the “capitalist ethos of self-help, patriarchy, and work ethic” (p. 147), and believed that it could benefit from “an infusion of a more advanced U.S. culture” by encouraging the emigration of African Americans to that country (p. 75). Many Black Protestant men and women considered Haiti as failing in its Christian morality and thought it needed an infusion of missionaries to remedy that shortcoming. Some, like William Pickens and Booker T. Washington, welcomed the U.S. invasion and occupation of Haiti in 1915 because they believed that insofar as Haiti’s leaders had embraced French culture they were not inclined to promote industrial development as the means by which to solidify their political independence. Washington went so far as to argue that to prevent a European power from taking control of Haiti in violation of the Monroe Doctrine, the United States had an obligation to do so.

Even a leading intellectual like W.E.B. Du Bois initially welcomed the U.S. invasion of Haiti, believing that it could benefit the “poor benighted people” (p. 197). Even though he thought that foreign intervention in Haiti could lead to the exploitation and subjugation of Haitians, that did not in his view outweigh the benefits that this “civilizing” mission could bring to Haiti. Du Bois’s objective in calling for African Americans to become fully involved in U.S. foreign policy toward Haiti emerged at the same time that he was also demanding the full inclusion of African Americans in U.S. democracy. By so doing, Byrd argues, Du Bois diminished the racial distinctiveness of African Americans while acknowledging it at the same time. “His people, he insinuated, were black but no less American and they would prove their involvement in the occupation,” and he believed that “white and black Americans were the most qualified agents of change in Haiti”; Du Bois’s view was that by “helping Haiti ‘rid herself

of thieves' without fastening 'American thieves on her,' the United States could rescue a country that could not rescue itself" (pp. 206–7).

Subsequently, however, Du Bois came to see the U.S. occupation as an "outrage of uninvited American intervention in Haiti" (p. 210). Persistent Haitian opposition to the occupation ultimately mobilized African Americans' public opinion in defense of Haitian sovereignty, and they compared the anti-occupation *cacos* rebellion in Haiti to those of Gabriel, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, and other slaves in the United States who had been inspired by the Haitian Revolution. Influenced by the Haitian uprising that also stimulated an international anti-occupation movement, Du Bois changed his views and in effect "enlisted himself in the fight for Haitian independence" (p. 223). Ultimately, Byrd concludes, he came to see "the liberation of Haiti as a step toward stopping militarism, an obstacle to global black freedom that stemmed from the self-destructive tendencies of the so-called civilized world" (p. 237). This experience, Byrd concludes, led Du Bois to see the "connection among U.S. capitalism, militarism, and imperialism, exposing the unstable foundation of the world that white supremacy had made," and led him to become a staunch critique of capitalism (pp. 227–35).

The Black Republic brings to light the differing, sometimes contradictory and paternalistic views of African Americans toward Haiti, as well as those who opposed U.S. policies. The book could have been even stronger if Byrd had engaged in a more critical consideration of the concepts that grounded his analysis: those of race, racial solidarity, and Black internationalism. What his discussion shows is that these ideological constructs are not only contradictory but reflective of the class interests of those who espoused them.

Alex Dupuy

Department of Sociology, Wesleyan University, Middletown CT, USA
 adupuy@wesleyan.edu