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*The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves' Civil War* by David S. Cecelski (review)

John Cimprich

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in a failed attempt “to retake a city of secondary importance” the reader is left wondering why the author believes that the campaign merits the lavish attention he has accorded it (p. 247).

TRACY MCKENZIE is chair of the history department at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. He is the author of *One South or Many?: Plantation Belt and Upcountry in Civil War–Era Tennessee* (1994) and *Lincolmites and Rebels: A Divided Town in the American Civil War* (2006).

*The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves’ Civil War.* By David S. Cecelski. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012. Pp. 352. \$30.00 cloth; \$30.00 ebook)

David S. Cecelski’s biography of Abraham H. Galloway, an African American leader in the Civil War era, is a masterpiece of research. While the book contains more context than many life studies, it also has much substance accumulated from a very extensive search for information. Moreover, it illuminates how the events of the period affected the communities of slaves and freedmen.

Galloway (1837-70) developed an intelligent and assertive personality, while growing up as a slave in coastal North Carolina, where he became a self-hired mason and where coastal commerce exposed him to outside influences. Questioning slavery, he escaped on a cargo ship in 1857 and eventually reached Canada. After joining the militant wing of abolitionism, he returned as a speaker to the United States and even visited the black-operated nation of Haiti in the Caribbean. When the Civil War began, his connections led to a job as a scout and spy for Major General Benjamin Butler in Virginia, North Carolina, and Louisiana. Captured by Confederates at Vicksburg, Mississippi, Galloway mysteriously escaped or was released and then left for New Bern, North Carolina. There, he resumed work for the Federal army, but mostly concentrated on developing the contraband community as a social and political leader. He also travelled to participate in a visit by a local delegation to Lincoln, the 1864 National Convention

of Colored Men, and the creation of chapters for the new National Equal Rights League. After the war, he argued for equality in race relations, maintained a wide network of contacts, served in the North Carolina government, and survived assassination attempts. Galloway died suddenly at the age of thirty-three from heart disease.

Cecelski argues that Galloway typified the radical segment of slave and freedman society. He used persuasion, but he also supported force when necessary to oppose slavery and to defend rights. He also supported workers' and women's rights (the author holds that African Americans generally accorded women more equality than did whites). Galloway thrived on building communities of contrabands (wartime runaways) in federally occupied North Carolina and emerged as a prominent contraband leader by 1864. Regarding the process of emancipation, Cecelski emphasizes both the runaways' assertiveness and their dependence on the Federal government for legal changes. During Reconstruction, Galloway saw ground lost because of conservative blacks and violent whites. Very aware of the prejudices of southern and northern whites, he always focused on advancing black interests but sought to build common ground with whites whenever possible.

The study has a few minor flaws. It includes some errors in contextual information, such as the claim that George Stearns became "the Union army's commissioner of negro recruiting" when he just briefly led the program in Middle Tennessee (p. 250). The author makes a commendable effort to interpret his findings but occasionally either overrates Galloway's impact or makes unprovable claims about the views of large groups. The writing overall is very graceful but at times unnecessarily repeats facts and analysis. More importantly than these matters, Cecelski's study does achieve deeper insights than previous studies in its examination of the thought of contraband activists.

JOHN CIMPRICH is professor of history at Thomas More College in Crestview Hills, Kentucky. His works include *Fort Pillow, a Civil War Massacre, and Public Memory* (2005) and *Slavery's End in Tennessee, 1861-1865* (1985).