

Born Criminal: Matilda Joslyn Gage, Radical Suffragist

Angelica Shirley Carpenter

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Angelica Shirley Carpenter's *Born Criminal* skillfully fills in the history of an activist erased from history.

While nineteenth-century women's suffrage movements often saw elite white women fighting for their rights and no one else's, key members of the movement were fairly intersectional. Matilda Joslyn Gage, the subject of *Born Criminal*, was one such leader.

Gage grew up in a stop on the Underground Railroad, coming into contact with slaves, abolitionists, and radicals from a young age. This experience shaped her, and allowed her to develop a more inclusive worldview than some of her contemporaries. Susan B. Anthony, whom history credits for being a pioneer of women's rights, had notoriously racist and classist views; Gage, who is barely recognized in textbooks and other nonfiction material, pushed for the rights of *all* women.

Born Criminal tracks Gage's life from childhood to death, illuminating the incredible work she did. This includes writing seminal texts on women's rights, leading conventions, and heading organizations. Meant for readers of many ages, the book develops a tangible portrait of the 1800s, of women's roles during that time, and of Gage herself. Photographs and illustrations add to the realization of the heroine and her time. Some nuance is lost in blanket claims, such as that women gained the right to vote in 1920, although that right was not yet secured for women of color.

Carpenter's book is a strong reminder that history is written by the victors. *Born Criminal* is an inspirational portrait of a woman who never gave up the fight for equality; her message could not be more timely or more necessary.

MYA ALEXICE (September/October 2018)

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