

Review of *A Common Humanity: Kansas Populism and the Battle for Justice and Equality*

An Unsung Classic: A review of *A Common Humanity: Kansas Populism and the Battle for Justice and Equality, 1854-1903* by O. Gene Clanton.

Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 2004.

Order from author at O.G.Clanton@Clantons.net.

Reviewed by Roy Bird, Director, Kansas Center for the Book

Nearly four decades ago, *Kansas Populism: Ideas and Men* was published and quickly became the authority on the subject of Populism in our state. In 2004, this book was thoroughly revised and expanded by its author, Gene Clanton.



While many libraries own Clanton's first book, few have been aware of his new book, *A Common Humanity: Kansas Populism and the Battle for Justice and Equality, 1854-1903*. His new title encompasses all the work the author has done in nearly 40 years since his earlier classic was published. He updated the historiography that has gone on since 1970, added two introductory chapters and refined some of his ideas based on his own research. The result is what one reviewer said about it: "If a person were to read only one book on Kansas Populism, this should be it."

Yet, many librarians remain unaware of this new book. Part of the reason for this lack of awareness is that the publisher, Sunflower University Press, was evolving at the time *A Common Humanity* was being published. The press was sold and many of the titles were offered to the authors at tremendous discounts, while the publisher itself became K S Publishing, Inc. in Manhattan. Gene Clanton has the stock at home and now is redistributing it.

And, it is a good title for libraries to consider. In a rare combination of scholarly and lively writing, Clanton makes the Populist era of the 1890s when William Allen White asked "What's the Matter With Kansas?" come alive. Just as White eventually changed his mind about Populists, Clanton can change the minds of his readers about the importance of that time more than a century ago that still impacts Kansans today. He challenges us to think about the past so we know how we got where we are. And while *A Common Humanity* does not specifically mention libraries. It has 26 text references, or notes about, or quotes from Annie LaPorte Diggs, first woman State Librarian, and first woman to hold this highest state government post till her time.

This is a book that every library (who owns his first book) should definitely have on their shelves. It's another classic as yet unsung. It is available directly from Dr. Clanton at his e-mail address, and he indicates copies can be acquired for bargain prices: An Unsung Classic: A review of *A Common Humanity: Kansas Populism and the Battle for Justice and Equality, 1854-1903*, by O. Gene Clanton. Manhattan: Sunflower University Press, 2004. Order from author at O.G.Clanton@Clantons.net.