voice of blacks, women, workers, and farmers. In each case, we trace the ebb and flow of social protest across time, noting the characteristics of the free spaces that nourished them and the influence of broader historical and social settings.

A broadly comparative approach demonstrates the common elements which make these movements democratic. It also clarifies the limitations of particular movements' vision. Despite dramatic differences, in each case we find the common characteristics of free spaces which we have identified: communal roots, autonomy, and public character. At the same time, the specific features of different movements allow us to explore how free spaces shape the structure, leadership, and ideology of each.

For example, under slavery, the very possibility of thinking and speaking in ways that opposed the dominant culture depended upon the creation of autonomous institutions—churches—about which white slaveowners had little knowledge and over which they had little control. The charismatic leadership of black ministers, in turn, shaped a leadership style which persists to the present. Thus the black church is an especially clear illustration of free space. Chapter 2 treats three particular historical moments when its role was highlighted.

One could make a similar argument about the importance of autonomous institutions such as churches, clubs, and saloons for the emergence of working-class culture. But for a highly mobile and culturally uprooted American work force, the issue of autonomy has been inseparably connected with the question of community. Indeed, in the case of American workers' movements, the possibility of group action has depended crucially upon the survival, sustenance, and sometimes the retrieval of historical memories and the re-creation of voluntary associations that bridge segmented worlds of work and community. An exploration of the theme of community, in turn, leads to some thoughts about the need to reevaluate widely used concepts such as "class consciousness."

The chapter on the history of feminism shifts the primary

focus to the public aspects of free spaces. For women to claim their citizenship rights, they required environments in which they could develop public identities and skills, simultaneously drawing upon and changing traditions that defined women in terms of family and personal worlds. In the process, women redefined the meaning of "public" and "common good." Yet the fact that those environments were also shaped by the realities of class and race ultimately limited both the claim to female citizenship and the constituency that could be mobilized in its name. Finally, populist movements rooted in rural America illustrate the powerful and complex role of traditional ideologies. And they highlight in particular the importance of democratic participation that teaches values of citizenship, racial tolerance, and the common good to any inclusive vision of "the people."

Free spaces, then, are the places in which the pieties we learn in school or hear in Fourth of July speeches take on living substance and meaning. A deeper understanding of them recasts the role of voluntary associations—considered, for example, in current neoconservative thought to be the main barrier against an all-encompassing modern state—from that of defensive refuge to active source of change. And it suggests, finally, the need to rethink our contemporary approaches to public life and politics, social change, and democracy itself.