

[Amy M. Taylor Wins 2019 John Nau Book Prize](#)

Discussion published by William Kurtz on Sunday, May 5, 2019

The John L. Nau III Center for Civil War History at the University of Virginia is pleased to announce Amy Murrell Taylor's [*Embattled Freedom: Journeys through the Civil War's Slave Refugee Camps* \(University of North Carolina, 2018\)](#) as the winner of the 2019 John Nau Book Prize in American Civil War History. Taylor tells the story of emancipation through the experiences of refugees who fled slavery and remained within the Union Army's zones of control. In doing so she shows the messiness of the freedom process and how it transpired idiosyncratically depending on geography and time, with the Union Army an essential part of the transition. Like the prior studies on contraband camps, she recognizes their harshness and the often-arbitrary decision-making of Union authorities. But she also sees these experiences and camps as possible places of empowerment with schools, churches, and other institutions aiding African Americans in the transition to freedom. She does so by humanizing the work: putting names and faces on central actors who carry the bulk of the narrative. *Embattled Freedom* represents a true tour de force of historical investigation and writing that keeps to the forefront the humanity of the people undergoing one of the most significant transitions in U.S. History. This prize carries with it a \$25,000 award and will be conferred at a dinner at UVA in the fall of 2019.

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