

Remarks delivered by Christopher James Bonner upon award of the James Broussard First Book Prize to Sarah L. H. Gronningsater at the 2025 SHEAR annual meeting

SHEAR's James Broussard Prize for a first book published in 2024 is awarded to Sarah L. H. Gronningsater for *The Rising Generation: Gradual Abolition, Black Legal Culture, and the Making of National Freedom* (UPenn Press). Gronningsater has crafted a people's history of gradual abolition, centering the ways ordinary Black New Yorkers engaged with the law and shaped the development of the republic in its formative decades. Gronningsater's remarkable archival work and careful analysis allow readers to know how Black women, men, and children experienced the uncertainties of abolition and how they thought about their lives. While scholars have acknowledged that gradual emancipation in the revolutionary period set the stage for northern Black politics in later decades, this new work shows clear connections between those histories. The piecemeal process of abolition demanded that African Americans learn the law, and they would later deploy that knowledge in their long struggles toward racial justice. As it engages with the complexities of legal culture and the shape of antislavery, the book remains a deeply human story about the search for a meaningful freedom. *The Rising Generation* urges us to continue asking critical questions about who practiced politics in the early republic and what tools they brought to that work.