

The power of book reviews

As research scholars in political science, our core responsibilities include the production of new political knowledge in books, peer-reviewed articles, and the public media. Among these outlets, books traditionally enjoy the greatest influence on public discourse as well as on researchers' careers and the trajectory of the discipline. Unless we publish books, our ability to broaden the scope of political knowledge is limited. Unfortunately, writing and publishing books has not always been easy for scholars of race, ethnicity, and politics, whose very mission speaks truth to the power of white supremacy, in a profession *born* in 19th century racism and the racist backlash against Reconstruction.

For most of its history since 1880, political science has been disdainful, if not hostile, to racial subjects. Mainstream scholarship and publishers ignored racial political studies, for more than a century during which the discipline's norms, methods, and canons were established and entrenched. Only since the 1980s, have publishers, libraries, and our own colleagues taken racial politics seriously. This change resulted directly from the civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s, when racial segregation in political science graduate programs began to end, and a critical mass of researchers invested in the study of race and politics finally emerged. One important sign of this transformation was the 1995 creation of the APSA Section on Race, Ethnicity, and Politics (REP)—marking the discipline's first formal acknowledgement that our work constitutes a legitimate field of scholarly inquiry.

Since that time our subfield has steadily grown. Academic journals, book publishers, and political science departments began to adopt “Race, Ethnicity, and Politics” as a framework for classifying research and defining new opportunities for book series, special symposia, and faculty job searches. Review committees for the discipline's small number of racially-aware book awards, including APSA's Ralph Bunche Award, the REP Section's best book awards, NCOBPS' W.E.B. DuBois Award, and others from the Latina/o Caucus, the Asian Pacific American Caucus, and other scholarly groups, have seen a dramatic increase in the numbers and production quality of books in our fields. It is not uncommon for these committees to receive 50 or more new

books each year. A growing handful of publishers are producing attractive brochures and catalogs focusing attention on their offerings in one or more of the REP subject areas. These changes suggest that our subfield and its practitioners have been successful, earning increased interest and respect for our work.

Yet, one key area of professional recognition has largely eluded us, and that is book reviews. The relative scarcity of page space in scholarly journals has meant that even our best books are disadvantaged in competition for space and attention, for reviews by expert peers. Under Jeffrey C. Isaac's leadership, first as book review editor and then as general editor, *Perspectives on Politics* has given REP book reviews much more space than in past years. Likewise, the *National Political Science Review* has always been attentive to books about African American and African politics. Most general-interest political science journals, however, have been less successful in producing consistent, timely, and well-informed reviews of books about Black, Latino, Asian American, and Indigenous politics.

That is where we come in. Under Editor-in-Chief Karthick Ramakrishnan's leadership, the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics* has made a commitment to publish book reviews written by experts in the field in order to provide scholars, teachers, students, general readers, and libraries with expert assessments of important new titles for classroom adoption, research, or reference. These reviews can be crucial elements in a book's market acceptance, availability, and contribution to authors' professional success in hiring, promotion, and tenure decisions. But for book reviews in a new journal, it takes time to break into the academic book industry, whose editors and marketing managers have well-established routines and existing contact lists—which may or may not include authors producing the best work in our field. Nonetheless, in just over 1 year, we are now receiving regular shipments of excellent titles.

With this issue of *JREP*, we will have published reviews of 19 books, on subjects as diverse as urban political culture, presidential elections, the political thought of Frantz Fanon, racial and ethnic politics in southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe, South Asian and Muslim integration in the West, European and U.S. immigration policy, neoliberalism, Black women legislators, Indigenous sovereignty, the politics of incarceration, and more. Methodologically, the books we have reviewed have incorporated political behavior, political psychology, race theory, public policy analysis, and cultural critique, among others. Our reviewers have been prominent, accomplished scholars such as Andy Aoki, Khalilah

Brown-Dean, Stephen Caliendo, David Covin, Bilal Dabir Sekou, Franke Wilmer, Cathy Schneider, Christina Rivers, Maria Chávez, and Clarence Lusane; younger stars such as Debra Thompson, Candis Watts Smith, Efrén Pérez, and Keesha Middlemass; and emergent new scholars, including Najja Baptist, Alexandre Pelletier, and Teresa Cappiali. Some are based in the United States, and some in other countries.

Whatever their rank, prominence, or location, all of our reviewers have shown commitment to *JREP*'s mission, by offering careful and thoughtful critique when called for, and praise when deserved. The goal we share is to make our colleagues' work more visible, but also more adept, more incisive, and more useful. There is no turning back. After more than a century of neglect by political science, our communities of color in the United States, and increasingly, our international populations of migrants, refugees, and other marginalized populations, will never again find themselves excluded from the pages of political science books and journals. But, we still need your help.

If you are a book author, please contact your publisher or editor, and ask that *two copies* of your book be sent to me (address below), for distribution to an expert reviewer. If you are a publisher, please send *two copies* of new books for possible review, clearly requesting *JREP* consideration.

And, we are still recruiting qualified reviewers. If you are interested in being a reviewer, please send an email to affigne@providence.edu, indicating your area of interest and including your vitae—but please do not volunteer to review a particular title, as our code of ethics does not allow us to accept self-nominations. When a book in your subject area is submitted for review, we will contact you to confirm your availability and make delivery arrangements. Any book you review will be yours to keep.

Finally, on behalf of everyone at *JREP*, please accept my appreciation for your continued support. It means the world to us, and without your participation, this important new journal could never have succeeded as well as we have.

Send books and correspondence to: *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*, c/o Tony Affigne, Book Review Editor, Department of Political Science, 316 Howley Hall, Providence College, Providence, RI 02918, USA.

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