

## BOOK REVIEWS

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Kathleen Belew and Ramón A. Gutiérrez, eds. *A Field Guide to White Supremacy*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2021. 424 pp. Paperback \$24.95.

In his monumental 1944 study, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, the famed Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal outlined the fundamental contradiction facing Americans at the end of World War II, that of the gulf between what he called the “American Creed,” the supposed commitment to ideals of democracy and equal opportunity, and the reality of racial discrimination and segregation. While many continue to see this gap between ideal and reality as an aberration from America’s democratic promise, the exceptional collection of essays in Kathleen Belew and Ramón A. Gutiérrez’s *A Field Guide to White Supremacy* demonstrate that the persistent failure to resolve this contradiction is deeply engrained in the country’s history and that the “American dilemma” is, perhaps, all but unresolvable within the structure of the United States as presently constituted. Indeed, as its chapters collectively demonstrate, the United States as both an idea and a nation was impossible without white supremacy. In short, as contributor Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor sums up the *Guide’s* central argument: “Race and racism have not been exceptions; instead, they have been the glue that holds the United States together” (39).

*A Field Guide to White Supremacy* tracks the complex career of white supremacy, settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, anti-Semitism, and nativism in the United States. It is not a traditional edited collection, but rather a guide to help people name, notice, and identify “variant forms of white supremacy, ranging from systems to laws, from hate crimes to quiet indifference, from everyday interactions that comprise white supremacist society to the movements that demand something else” (1). Fitting this approach, it opens with a multi-authored section, “Thoughts on the *Associated Press Stylebook*,” which points to the ways in which white supremacy (and whiteness itself) has been and continues to be naturalized through language and journalistic style. The other nineteen essays (some of them previously published) further unpack white supremacy in historical and contemporary context. This is an indispensable volume for historians of race, racism, gender and sexuality, and immigration who are interested in the myriad ways that white supremacy has been produced and reproduced in the United States since its founding.

The central thread running through the essays is how the targeting, containment, and control of minoritized peoples maintain white supremacy. Juan Perea argues that exclusion and deportation of immigrants has been integral to the United States from its founding, showing how “the prerogatives of the white state have often required the expulsion of presumed threatening nonwhites” (83). But exclusion and containment of

“threatening nonwhites” was not white supremacy’s only prerogative. As Jamelle Bouie adds in his essay on the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Alabama, lynching and racist violence accomplished a double move that “both preserved white dominance against the prospect of Black equality *and* restored the presumed moral status of white communities by eliminating threats to white purity and virtue as well as white authority” (117). White supremacy, in other words, aimed not only to control minoritized people in the United States, but also to perpetuate the perceived innocence of whites and whiteness.

Policing in its myriad forms has been central to the construction and maintenance of white supremacy. While historical discussions of policing rooted in the slave patrol and settler colonial campaigns of elimination are limited, the essays show how the police continue to determine whose lives are valued and whose are not. Most crucially, they demonstrate how policing was foundational to white supremacy. As Joseph Darda notes in his chapter titled “The Whiteness of Blue Lives,” the calls of Blue Lives Matter are a demonstration of the long history of white supremacy reproducing itself by valuing police lives over Black lives.

Two areas of the collection deserve particular attention. First, the chapters focusing on rape culture, anti-LGBTQ violence, and violence against Black and Brown trans women offer crucial insights. Rebecca Solnit’s piece on rape culture and domestic violence highlights the need to see gendered violence as a key building block of white supremacy, while Roderick Ferguson’s essay explores the ways in which the Pulse Nightclub shooting was rooted in a homophobic social system and ideology. Similarly, Croix Saffin presents an in-depth exploration of the disproportionate violence targeting Black and Brown trans women as a component of systemic oppression and explores how whiteness is normalized within the LGBTQ community in ways that leave Black and Brown trans women marginalized. In short, Saffin presents white supremacy as an invidious system that infiltrates and shapes even progressive movements. As they suggest, “it is a system designed to control, manage, regulate, and oppress anyone outside of cis-het white maleness” (158).

Second, the section on anti-immigrant policy insightfully unpacks not only the country’s deep history of nativism but also the forces fueling xenophobia and right-wing populist movements in the twenty-first century. As Carly Goodman explains in her chapter on John Tanton’s anti-immigrant network, Donald Trump’s draconian anti-immigrant policies were rooted in a four-decade-long effort by Tanton’s organization, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), to bring the restrictionist wing of the anti-immigrant movement into the mainstream by putting a “respectable face on the pro-restriction side of the debate” (219). Such efforts were wildly successful. Crucially, as Adam Goodman notes in his chapter, Trump’s policies were only the most recent iteration of a much longer history of policies and practices that built what he calls America’s “deportation machine.” And, as Jessica Ordaz concludes, such deportation policies and regimes created “a conduit of migrant death” (244).

The collection’s final section brings the reader to the present. It is a sobering history of the rise of the alt-right and the white power movement. Nicole Hemmer clearly outlines the ways in which the alt-right rally at Charlottesville in 2017 exposed the movement but observes that the alt-right ultimately failed in its effort to use the rally to enter mainstream

politics. However, as Hemmer suggests, despite the “deplatforming” (302) of the movement, its influence on GOP politics remains. Meanwhile, in her reflection on recent history and the journalistic focus on the “lone wolf” framework to explain away white supremacist violence, Belew shows how perceived individual instances of white supremacist violence are not aberrations but central and interconnected pieces of American history.

A more complete understanding of white supremacy is the first step to enabling America to live up to its egalitarian promise. In this regard, the *Field Guide* ends on a somewhat hopeful note, with Belew and Gutiérrez concluding that “perhaps this is the moment when systemic forms of racism, xenophobia, misogyny, homophobia, antisemitism, and transphobia will finally be, if not eviscerated, then profoundly tempered” (333). However, the volume pays little attention to the history of resistance to white supremacy that would put such cautious optimism in broader context, and the rest of the essays are decidedly more wary of the potential for systemic change. As nearly all the authors suggest, white supremacy and the United States have been intimately interrelated since the country’s inception. To resolve the “American dilemma,” then, requires more than reform. It will require disentangling the United States from white supremacy through an abolitionist politics and vision of a world reimaged.

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Einav Rabinovitch-Fox. *Dressed for Freedom: The Fashionable Politics of American Feminism*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021. 248 pp. Paperback \$24.95.

Women’s struggles to gain control over what they wear have a long history that parallels and is part of women’s rights advocacy in the United States. In *Dressed for Freedom: The Fashionable Politics of American Feminism*, Einav Rabinovitch-Fox uses an expansive framework to trace a century of feminist objections to uncomfortable and impractical clothing. Challenging simplistic views that highlight only feminist criticism of fashion, the author explores the ways in which feminists utilized dress to effectively broadcast the popularity of their movement and to undermine opposition to feminism based on media-fueled stereotypes of activists as unattractive. She also considers women who adopted fashionable styles that were associated with progress and modernity, but who did not necessarily identify as or with feminists. To do so, she draws on a wealth of sources, ranging from magazine and newspaper accounts to memoirs and organizational records, to assay such diverse topics as the nineteenth-century emergence of the woman’s rights and dress reform movements; turn-of-the-century garment workers, popular culture icons such as the Gibson Girl; the clothing of suffragists; flapper fashion; midcentury female fashion professionals; and fashion debates and practices that took place amid the late-1960s and 1970s heyday of the women’s liberation movement. The book is further enriched by the