

licensing or permits, particularly from the California Coastal Commission. Scientists agree that the energy-intensive desalination plants contribute to global warming while causing additional environmental problems.

Having read the book and been inspired by its stories, I'm still not sure about its intended audience. It might be appropriate for an introductory-level college class in environmental studies, provided that the customary pedagogical ancillaries of chapter outlines and test banks are added to the publication package. General readers, particularly those concerned about climate change and looking for ways to be part of the solution, will find much of use in these pages. The blend of accessible science with compelling human stories, focused on the most critical issue of our time, is the salient contribution of this timely book.

Thomas J. Osborne

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Mitchell Schwarzer. *Hella Town: Oakland's History of Development and Disruption*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2022. 424 pp. Paperback \$24.95.

Oakland's legacy as a regional, national, and international leader is at the core of Mitchell Schwarzer's *Hella Town: Oakland's History of Development and Disruption*. Showing how technology and race have remade this California city time and time again, *Hella Town* carefully navigates two trends: urban renewal and responses to it from different publics within Oakland. In many ways, this historical narrative, spanning from the 1890s until today, can help explain some of the structural barriers that shape the felt experiences of many minoritized populations in Oakland, and the book speaks directly to the experiences of the Black community during and after the 1960s.

The title *Hella Town* refers to Oakland's "East Bay youth culture after the 1970s." The first word is a "shortened version of *helluva* or *hellacious*, signifying 'very' or 'extremely,'" while the second is a nod to Oakland's nickname, "The Town," and its use in popular culture (such as in the rap lyrics of Too \$hort and in professional sports). Thoroughly documenting Oakland's struggles over the past 130 years, the book frames each issue or struggle within its political context. The writing is clear, accessible, and rich, and the maps and photos, some of them by the author, are outstanding.

Hella Town seeks to address "how emergent transportation technologies and systemic racism configured access to urbanized land" (5). The author continually shows Oakland's pride in its "upstart status," reminds us that Oakland is "warmer" in weather and personality than other cities statewide or nationally, and emphasizes Oakland's "exceptional convergence of religions, ethnicities, races, social classes, and sexual orientations" (5). But the Oakland experience took a cruel turn for Black migrants who "arrived in a city with escalating unemployment and racist barriers" and who "were understandably confused"

(201). “As time went on,” Schwarzer writes, “that confusion turned to rage. Instead of a rising industrial powerhouse, Oakland was turning into a racial powder keg” (201).

Framework, method, and narrative are in great harmony in *Hella Town* as Schwarzer highlights the political process at the center of Oakland’s ongoing and continuous transformation. He makes an essential point early in the text: “Development, the act of adding to (and/or subtracting from) the physical makeup of a city, invariably brings forth disruption. How development proceeds, gradually or rapidly, thoughtfully or recklessly, openly or behind closed doors, determines the severity of the disruption as well as who comes out ahead and who gets left behind” (4).

The narrative focuses on three changes in transportation technology: the respective advents of the electric streetcar, the automobile, and the high-speed rail system. In the book’s “Coda,” Schwarzer also examines battles around gentrification and the early COVID-19 impact and response. Functionally, he tells us, the electric streetcar allowed the geographic spread of Oakland through new subdivisions at previously inaccessible distances; the automobile enabled individual access to, from, and around Oakland; and the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system created access points from Oakland to the greater Bay Area. Racial justice issues arose with each of these technological innovations, according to the author, because people in the middle and upper classes (who were usually white) tended to have better means to actually access and utilize public services. Examples include homes in the new subdivisions during the streetcar revolution; automobile access in Oakland that turned city development away from pedestrian traffic and toward automobile scale; and BART, which literally split apart some neighborhoods in West Oakland. The latter event, occurring in the 1960s, caused many Black families to move to East Oakland’s Elmhurst neighborhood and many Latinx families to move to the Fruitvale neighborhood. *Hella Town* covers almost the entirety of Oakland’s historical development and answers many questions about its planning, including deals and initiatives made at the city, county, regional, state, and national levels. By doing so, the book explains the real-world experiences of the city’s Black, Latinx, and immigrant communities.

In addition to providing a deeply engaging analysis of Oakland’s development and disruption, the book is thought-provoking for this reviewer. As someone who has written about Oakland’s political development—from the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in the 1960s to rappers such as Too \$hort, E-40, 2Pac, and Mac Dre of the 1980s and 1990s—I was astonished by some of the things I read in *Hella Town*. For example, Schwarzer’s descriptions of overcrowding in West Oakland immediately reminded me of Huey Newton’s particularly vivid account of childhood poverty in his autobiography, and of accounts of how vehemently the Black Panthers objected to the plans for BART. When the author discusses changes to road construction in the late 1890s and early 1900s, which ultimately made Oakland less friendly to pedestrians, I am reminded of the account of 2Pac’s altercation with an Oakland police officer over jaywalking. The fact that Oakland was stripped of its pedestrian scale (with crosswalks accommodating automobiles, not travelers on foot) nearly a hundred years earlier suggests a structural reason behind the rapper’s arrest for the pettiest of crimes. Finally, *Hella Town*’s discussion of the “hyphy movement” in Oakland reminds me of different forms of resistance practiced within the hyphy subculture—practices such as “Sideshows,” “Ghostriding,” and “Whistle

Tip” techniques in particular. The author also describes the government response: “road barriers, speed bumps, narrowed streets, and reduced lanes (often with bicycle lanes), and lower speed limits” (107). Through a multitude of essential case studies such as these, *Hella Town* shows overwhelming evidence of the relationship between “technological innovations and racist practices.”

As a whole, this book is a deeply engaging analysis of Oakland’s development and disruption and is highly recommended for anyone who wants to know more about Oakland, technology, or race. The writing is clear and accessible and the cases are vivid and telling. *Hella Town* shows Oakland to be a first-class city that has fought to stay above the fray and that actually transformed itself into a *Weltstadt*, or world city, “premised on high technology and featuring astounding capital accumulation and global dominance on the part of its large corporations” (324). If this is true, and *Hella Town* makes the strongest of cases that it is, technology and race will likely continue to be factors in Oakland’s future. My hope is that Oakland will be better able to accommodate the needs of its Black, Latinx, and immigrant communities in the future. These groups have regularly experienced trends of housing displacement, employment changes during deindustrialization, and gentrification (or even “blockbusting”) led by the skyrocketing price of housing in surrounding cities and towns. Indeed, *Hella Town* might help people understand the structural reasons behind some of these pains of the past, which, with deep analysis and reflection, could lead to changes and initiatives to create a better Oakland.

Lavar Pope

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Andy Horowitz. *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020. 296 pp. Hardcover \$36.00.

As I write this review, in early December 2021, various news outlets are marking the end of the Atlantic hurricane season—and also questioning whether the word *season* makes sense anymore. The time between major weather-related disasters is growing shorter and shorter. Are parts of California still experiencing drought? Then it’s still fire season.

Andy Horowitz’s prizewinning *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015* is a major contribution to environmental history, but it is also an impressively robust work of social, political, economic, and urban history. That makes it just the kind of scholarly project that can help us develop both a nuanced understanding of weather-related disasters—in this case, 2005’s Hurricane Katrina—and an appropriate response to them.

In some ways, *Katrina*’s most important intervention is in debates about environmental justice. Everyone in this field is familiar with the truth that the most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities tend to take the brunt of environmental destruction. But that truth has often led to the theorization of environmental injustice as something that divides us further, leaving us with discrete victims and perpetrators. What Horowitz shows in this