

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

LAVAR POPE, a clinical associate professor of political science at Loyola University Chicago’s Arrupe College, is the author of *Rap and Politics: A Case Study of Panther, Gangster, and Hyphy Discourses in Oakland, CA (1965–2010)* (2020).

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

painstaking history is that environmental disasters implicate all of us, at least to an extent, and so environmental injustice must ultimately be understood in terms of commonality as well as discrimination. There will be no weathering of climate change without a robust vision of common thriving and shared responsibility.

Hurricane Katrina, Horowitz argues, cannot be dismissed as an event specific to New Orleans, or to the South, or to impoverished African Americans, or to certain irresponsible government and corporate leaders. Rather, this complex event reflects pathologies in the social, political, economic, and environmental relationships that Americans as a whole have built over the past century. This book, in other words, is meant to be read, and ought to be read, by anyone who wishes to be an engaged citizen in our current moment of climate change, racial reckoning, and vast economic inequality.

Perhaps Horowitz's most brilliant move is to begin his story almost a century before Katrina struck, back when New Orleans's successful weathering of an unnamed hurricane (in 1915) opened the floodgates, as it were, to a massive development effort in areas that probably never had any chance of being safe from high wind and water. More broadly, starting in 1915 allows Horowitz to explain in detail how seemingly unusual events like hurricanes are set up by long, plodding, everyday histories of "slow violence" and "cruel optimism." Those two phrases, taken from literary theorists Rob Nixon and Lauren Berlant, help Horowitz show how hurricanes are ordinary, chronic, expected, and evolutionary (to paraphrase a passage on p. 15)—not exogenous and exceptional. The book could have gone even further in this sort of philosophical exploration, perhaps by bringing in Charles Perrow's idea of normal accidents or the complex systems theories now commonplace in the scholarship of science and technology studies. But Horowitz succeeds nicely in balancing theoretical and empirical approaches to argue that our response to perceived disaster should never be to lobby for "recovery" or restoration of the status quo—rather, we need to confront the historical developments that made the disaster possible.

Horowitz's research on the history of oil development, canal building, graft, real estate deals, and coastal erosion is both broad and deep, covering all kinds of technical reports as well as quirky journal articles and poignant oral histories. His analysis embraces structural approaches while also acknowledging individual agency—showing, for instance, that there was nothing inevitable about the dominance of the oil industry or the Dixiecrats, since they were opposed by critics at every stage. The writing ranges effortlessly from factual reportage and lists of relevant statistics to moving stories of families struggling to defend their lives, homes, and dignity.

Powerful echoes knit the book together and remind us of how history lives on in people's consciousness (I'm thinking especially of the way the bombing of the levees in 1927 was widely remembered in greater New Orleans, making certain people feel as though their homes might always be sacrificed for the sake of wealthier residents downtown). And throughout, Horowitz shows a striking ability to pause and capture the significance of the detailed, nuanced, textured stories he's telling, in crisp, cogent sentences: "It was not primarily poor New Orleans or rich New Orleans, nor was it white New Orleans or black New Orleans, that flooded during Katrina. It was twentieth-century New Orleans" (119).

To me, the only weak part of the book is its final chapter, which is twenty pages longer than any of the others and clogged with details from various reports published in the decade after Katrina. It adds up to a rather predictable condemnation of New Orleans's post-hurricane "recovery." If, as Horowitz asserts, "history can help reveal the range of possible solutions" (5), then this book ought to have concluded with some suggestions of alternate pathways, especially regarding flood protection. In perhaps the messiest part of the recovery debates, the proposal that the city permanently eliminate certain hurricane-vulnerable neighborhoods was received as "a racist plot" (145) by many members of the African American communities lobbying to return to those neighborhoods. Horowitz acknowledges this messiness, this "moral tension inherent in the struggle between a right to return home and a right to safe housing" (147), but he does little to address it.

What would environmental justice actually look like in this case? Was there no way to honor the right of return, provide compensation for past discrimination and losses, and simultaneously protect more land from development in the name of flood control? One can certainly understand why African American homeowners might be given priority over urban planners. But without more wetlands and much more extensive flood-control infrastructure, the same vulnerable neighborhoods will always remain vulnerable. The book concludes with an admirable refusal to offer a happy ending and with the eloquent formulation that historical reckoning, done honestly and artfully, "gives weight to loss and substance to hope" (196). But I found myself searching for even a hint of hopefulness in the final pages.

Could we not imagine new, affordable housing on higher ground, and new jobs in renewable energy, and new green spaces, and new enforcement of antidiscrimination laws, and new campaigns to bolster democratic participation? Perhaps I'm asking too much of a history book, but Horowitz clearly aspires to this kind of engagement with policymaking, so I hope that in future works he'll take up his own challenge more directly.

Regardless, *Katrina: A History, 1915–2015* is one of the most richly textured urban environmental histories I've ever read, right up there with Andrew Hurley's classic book *Environmental Inequalities*, about Gary, Indiana. And it could not be more timely, in this perpetual season of climate change.

Aaron Sachs

AARON SACHS is a professor of history and American studies at Cornell University. His next book, *Stay Cool: Why Dark Comedy Matters in the Fight against Climate Change*, is forthcoming in April 2023.