

Reviews

Race, Labor, and Violence in the Delta: Essays to Mark the Centennial of the Elaine Massacre. Edited by Michael Pierce and Calvin White Jr. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2022. Pp. ix + 248, acknowledgments, introduction, notes, contributors, index. \$29.95, paperback)

In *Black Reconstruction*, scholar and activist W.E.B. Du Bois argued that emancipation produced a dramatic reversal of fortunes for African Americans: “The slave went free; stood for a brief moment in the sun, then moved back again toward slavery” (New York: Russell and Russell, 1935, p. 30). Du Bois’s idea of freedpeople being pulled “back toward slavery”—the title of the penultimate chapter of his book—is more than a haunting diagnosis of the failed possibility of Reconstruction. Rather, it provides a way to understand much of Black history for the rest of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Every time Black Americans organized, countervailing forces attempted to thwart their efforts at improvement. Such was the case in Elaine, Arkansas, when in 1919 whites murdered hundreds of Black sharecroppers who had begun to unionize, thereby temporarily crushing hope for Black freedom in the Delta. In 2019, scholars and community members commemorated the centennial of the Elaine Massacre, which resulted in *Race, Labor, and Violence in the Delta*. Nine essays make a convincing case that labor relations, techniques of oppression, and the incessant striving for better lives fundamentally shaped the Delta’s history. The first three essays examine aspects of labor and race relations from the 1870s to World War I, while the next three probe the interwar period with an emphasis on the 1920s. The final three essays address discrete topics that span the second half of the twentieth century. Some of the historians draw on previously published research to produce new insights related to the Elaine Massacre. From his prior examinations of nineteenth-century labor organizations in Arkansas, such as the Agricultural Wheel and the Knights of Labor, Matthew Hild finds patterns of interracial organizing and violent white backlash demonstrated in both the Cotton Pickers’ Strike of 1891 and the Elaine Massacre. Jeannie Whayne taps her extensive body of scholarship to situate the 1921 lynching of Henry Lowery within the community networks of power rooted in the plantation economy of Mississippi County. Whayne interprets Lowery’s murder as proof that whites had no tolerance for collective or individual acts that questioned their authority—whether that was organizing a union in Elaine or requesting a written statement of accounts from a planter as Lowery did. Greta de Jong offers wisdom collected



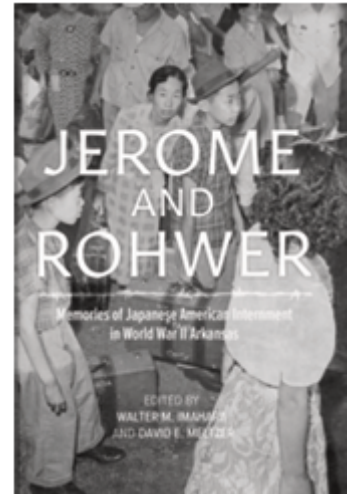
from aspects of her three previous books on struggles for social justice in the South, par-

ticularly after 1965. She shows that old and new forms of violence continued to impact Black lives during the late twentieth century. Other contributors offer new insights and point toward future areas of research. Cherisse Jones-Branch challenges readers to rethink white-produced narratives of Black women's criminality after World War I and instead interpret their actions as reflecting desire for opportunity. Michael Pierce disputes the claim made by some scholars that white landowners sought Mexican braceros after World War II due to a labor shortage. By studying the activism of Ethel Dawson, Pierce contends that Lincoln County planters hired seasonal workers to drive down wages and incentivize Blacks to leave the county to preserve white political power. John A. Kirk explores the continuities of Black activism and the discontinuities of white responses during the twentieth century. He suggests that the authority for policing the color line moved away from mob violence and toward state and local law enforcement as demonstrated by Governor Winthrop Rockefeller's mobilization of the National Guard to prevent whites from attacking Lance Watson and his fellow marchers in their 1969 walk against fear. A final group of authors consider nightriding and forced labor as unique forms of coercion. Through careful research in Arkansas newspapers, Guy Lancaster documents the pervasiveness of nightriding before and after the passage of Act 112 (a 1909 law intended to outlaw the practice). William Pruden III examines federal prosecutors' attempts to punish night riders, concluding that the Supreme Court's ruling in the 1906 Hodges case must be understood within the broader historical retreat from using Reconstruction-era measures to protect Black rights. Michael Vinson Williams investigates the forced labor camps of levee workers after the 1927 flood and how the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Federation of Labor attempted to improve labor conditions. Considered as a whole, these essays remind readers not only of the Elaine Massacre—one of the most horrific acts of racial violence in United States history—but also, crucially, of the intersections of race, labor, and violence in the Delta in the decades before and after this devastating episode. The book serves as a helpful introduction to the region's rich labor history. It is also an inspiration for others to continue investigating the events, organizations, and trends that either receive glancing treatment, such as the Southern Tenant Farmers Union as mentioned in Michael Honey's epigraph, or did not appear in these pages. The authors compellingly demonstrate the focusing power of a centennial. Each essay examines strategies of oppression, and many authors find an indomitable spirit of resistance that not even the worst forms of violence could drive out of the Delta.

--Michael K. Rosenow

Jerome and Rohwer: Memories of Japanese American Internment in World War II Arkansas. Edited by Walter M. Imahara and David E. Meltzer. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: The University of Arkansas Press, 2022. Pp. xxii + 228, foreword, preface, acknowledgments, introduction, appendix, index. \$29.95, hardcover)

The memories captured in this book are crucial ones to help us acknowledge and understand what really happened during the time of Japanese American incarceration during World War II. Every person affected went through many of the same things—being informed by authorities in California after the bombing of Pearl Harbor that they would be sent away, having to live in temporary sites such as horse stalls at racetracks, taking a train trip across the country to get to camps (including the two in Arkansas), attempting to make a home in tiny barracks— but they each experienced it in their own way. The accounts in the book are full of details, big things and small things remembered all these decades later. Taken together, they reveal the personal struggles of all the people affected—from realizing that, despite the fact that they had been told they were being held mostly to protect them from the surrounding populace, the guards’ guns were pointed at them, not away from them, to the daily humiliation of having to bathe and use the toilet without privacy. Historical accounts can paint with a broad brush, but seeing these finer brushstrokes has real value in seeing the effects of conflicts and policies on real people living their daily lives.



Living in Arkansas myself and having done my own delving into the history of the Rohwer and Jerome camps, I appreciated the vivid descriptions by these Californians. James Ichinaga’s account of Jerome is as follows: “If I were ever in charge of punishing a group of people, this is the place I would send them. The environmental elements were very hostile. It was hot and humid in the summer, freezing in winter. . . . I remember seeing those odd creatures called flying squirrels, bats, many species of birds, those wonderful insects called fireflies, and hearing the noisy croaking of the frogs at night. To this day I have never seen mosquitoes as huge as those in Arkansas” (p. 38). Captured also in the book are the diverse details of what happened to people and families after they left the camps as the war was drawing to a close. Some returned to their homes and farms in California—although not without careful forethought. As Fran Inouye Imahara said, “My father wanted us to go to Japan to live after our release and applied for Japanese citizenship. Relatives advised us there would be nothing for us there. They canceled our request and we returned to Fresno in 1946. We were very fortunate to have a place to return to since a dear family friend, a policeman with the Fresno Police Department, looked after our home” (p. 54). Many were not so lucky and had nothing to return to; they made other plans, such as the Imaharas’ move to New Orleans, where they developed a thriving landscaping business (p. xviii). A few accounts have details that astounded me. Clover Johnson said, “While [his friend] Harry [Nagata] was in the service in the Midwest or on [the] East Coast, he encountered fellow soldiers who had never seen anyone of Japanese ancestry before. Someone in command decided it would be hard for the men to fight an enemy they’d never seen. Harry Nagata was ordered to dress up in the uniform of a Japanese soldier and parade in front of the troops so they could see and hate ‘the face of the enemy.’ Needless to say, that was a horrible thing to do to a loyal American soldier and it breaks my heart every time I think about it” (p. 70). Another account, by Joh Sekiguchi, recalled a Boy Scout jamboree that included boys from Jerome and Rohwer as well as

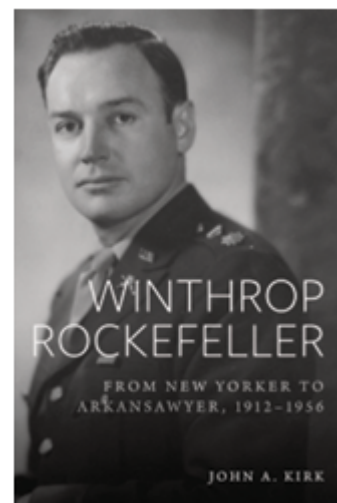
boys from nearby Arkansas City—noting the differences in the boys’ food and supplies: “The scouts from the two relocation camps . . . were loaded into the back of supply trucks and rode into town. . . . I remember one boy [from Arkansas City] climbing in with the rest of us and I noticed other boys from town in the other trucks. It must have taken a lot of courage for them to join a bunch of complete strangers—especially strangers many folks considered to be ‘the enemy.’ Some of the boys from the relocation centers had brought their scout uniforms with them when they relocated, but none of the Arkansas City boys had uniforms” (p. 130). The Arkansas City boys also ate from one big pot of beans, while the camp boys had army-ration-style food trucked in from the camps, including desert. Finally, Tim Taira recalled learning years after the fact the circumstances surrounding a visit to Jerome by a group of Hawaiian soldiers, who gave candy and cookies to the kids. He later learned that this group had been from the 100th Battalion, training at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, as part of the 442nd, the much decorated Japanese American regiment. As Taira said, “The ## Nisei [second-generation Japanese Americans] from Hawaii had not been interned and were a happy-go-lucky and gregarious bunch, quite different temperamentally from the mainland Nisei. These differences were causing considerable friction during training, so their CO had an idea. He sent busloads of the Hawaiians to Jerome. . . . En route to Jerome the group was cheerful and boisterous; during the return trip there was stunned silence. They were shocked to see the families of fellow trainees imprisoned behind barbed wire. They understood the situation now, and the friction between the two Nisei groups stopped” (p. 148). Acquiring and arranging all these accounts was a huge task and one that was done carefully and well. However, it is difficult to present a collection of oral histories in a cohesive manner, and that difficulty showed a bit in this book. The accounts have many common elements that can feel repetitive when reading cover to cover. The accounts are also arranged in alphabetical order by name, rather than by theme or location or chronology, which can leave the reader a bit off balance, encountering one new voice after another without always having a sense of how each story fits into the larger picture. Even the very beginning of the book sets up this scattered format, with a foreword written by three people, a preface by one editor (but not the other), and an introduction written by two people. Co-editor Walter Imahara’s account is in alphabetical order with the others, but I would have liked to have seen his story at the beginning, framing the other accounts and lending some cohesion. Overall, the book is a valuable collection of the voices of people who will soon be lost to time—although their stories will remain—and it will be a precious document in years to come to people doing research on family members and on the camps in Arkansas.

--Ali Welky

Winthrop Rockefeller: From New Yorker to Arkansawyer, 1912-1956. By John A. Kirk. (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2022. Pp. xi + 267, acknowledgments, notes, bibliography, index. \$24.95, hardcover)

In 1953, Winthrop “Win” Rockefeller, a

third-generation member of one of America's wealthiest and most powerful families, moved to Petit Jean Mountain in Conway County. He built a showplace Santa Gertrudis cattle-farming operation, which he named Winrock farms. In 1991's *Agenda for Reform: Winthrop Rockefeller as Governor of Arkansas, 1967-71*, historian Cathy Kunzinger Urwin analyzed his service as Arkansas's Republican governor from 1967 to 1971, but his New York life has received little scholarly attention. Until now. John A. Kirk, who is George Washington Donaghey Distinguished Professor of History at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR), examines his formative earlier life experiences to develop a more complete and nuanced portrait of the man. Based upon the Winthrop Rockefeller Collection, which is housed at the UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture, the Winthrop Rockefeller Papers at the Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), interviews and other sources, Kirk argues convincingly that his life in New York shaped his later career in Arkansas. Following a well-crafted introductory first chapter, the author devotes Chapters Two through Six to describing his childhood, education, and earlier career in the oil industry. Born on May 1, 1912 in Manhattan, Winthrop Rockefeller was educated at the Lincoln School, a practical learning-oriented institution, and the Loomis School, which was a traditional, college preparatory school. A poor student, he preferred the kind of "hands-on" learning, such as the lessons in cattle-raising, he engaged in at Lincoln. Notably, he and his brothers Nelson and David received diagnoses of dyslexia much later in their lives. Much to his family's disappointment, Winthrop's poor academic performance resulted in his resignation from Yale University in 1934. Kirk refutes some Rockefeller family historians' previous claims that an on-campus liaison led to his dismissal from Yale. To his family, his choice to enter the oil business helped make up for his lack of academic success. In 1934, he began learning each stage of the business by starting work as a roustabout laborer in Texas. He loved the experience—working in the field, the adventure, and the people. He inherited his family's commitment to improving race relations. During his time in Houston, Texas during the 1930s, he tried and failed to interest white leaders in establishing a community health program for African Americans. Through the experience he gained "valuable insight into the difficulties in dealing with southern race relations" (p. 80). His oil career did not quite live up to his family's expectations. Returning from the oil fields in 1937, he joined his father John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his brothers in the family's New York City offices. In 1939, he began working in the foreign trade department of Socony Vacuum, a derivative of his grandfather John D. Rockefeller Sr.'s Standard Oil Company. As someone who disliked working behind a desk, he struggled to find his place in an office. In Chapters Seven through Ten, Kirk details Winthrop's army career during World War II, including his service in Guam, Leyte, and Okinawa. He distinguished himself in the field of battle, returning from the war a decorated combat veteran. While in the army, he became friends with Frank Newell. In the early 1950s, Newell, an insurance broker from Little Rock, showed him the property that became Winrock. For this reviewer, who was less familiar with the

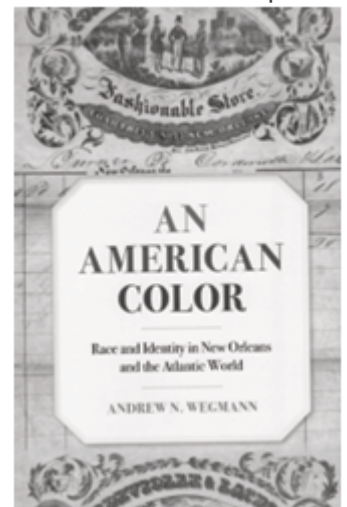


full extent of Winthrop's military career, this section was particularly informative. The final two chapters cover his first marriage to Barbara Paul "BoBo" Sears and his move to Arkansas. At the time of their marriage in 1948, she was pregnant with his only son, Winthrop Paul Rockefeller. Within eighteen months, the couple separated and became involved in a well-publicized, nasty, and drawn-out divorce, much to the embarrassment of Winthrop and his family. Their divorce was finalized in 1954. As Kirk has shown, his life was very much shaped by the "tension between seeking . . . to fulfill the high demands of being a member of the Rockefeller family . . . and . . . striving . . . to become his own person" (p. 6). Moving to Arkansas and building Winrock allowed him to contribute to his family's legacy—in his own way. Kirk's book is not hagiography. His subject emerges as a socially conscious, civically engaged, adventurous, courageous, and flawed individual. More than fifty years later, his legacy lives on in his adopted state. Thoroughly researched and engagingly written, *From New Yorker to Arkansawyer* should be essential reading for scholars of Arkansas's late twentieth century political history.

--Melanie K. Welch

An American Color: Race and Identity in New Orleans and the Atlantic World. By Andrew N. Wegmann. (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2022. Pp. xvi + 238, acknowledgments, note on language, introduction, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95, paperback)

In the final chapter of his work, *An American Color: Race and Identity in New Orleans and the Atlantic World*, Andrew N. Wegmann references the prevalent eighteenth- and nineteenth-century notion that American society could not be shared between white and non-white Americans. Despite this supposed incompatibility between the white and black communities, the New Orleans mixed-race Creole people forged a path and identity for themselves, embracing the ambiguous line between white and black, and in turn defining and redefining themselves as uniquely Creole within the changing American landscape. These are the people Wegman brings to the fore as he analyzes the origins and development of mixed-race middle-class Creoles in New Orleans—from their French origins in the 1730s through to their embrace of their American home in the 1860s. For Wegmann, these Creoles underwent a process of Americanization in which they carefully crafted their cultural identity over more than a century to promote economic and social uplift, as well as lay claim to a place uniquely theirs within New Orleans and greater American society. They were proud, educated, ambitious middle-class people who constantly endeavored to promote their community's growth and claim to status in a constantly shifting Atlantic World. In doing this, they understood race, race science, and racial ambiguity—manipulating these elements to their advantage while also forming a sense of identity



and belonging in a changing American land- scape. In constructing his argument, Wegmann addresses a historiographical record that, in his own words, has “complicated and simplified a massive antebellum population” (p. 3). In particular, Wegmann identifies Ira Berlin’s *Slaves Without Masters* as a landmark title that, while a substantive account on free blacks, overlooked the complexities of the Louisianan Creole population. In particular, he suggests Berlin’s work overstated and oversimplified the level of caste-subservience experienced by all free people of color—as well as removed these Louisianan mixed-race Creoles from the historical narrative of America. Consequently, the historiography since Berlin’s 1974 work has ignored these francophone peoples in studies of the South, instead incorporating them into Caribbean studies. This is the position Wegmann argues against in *An American Color*. He asserts that these New Orleans Creoles were very much a part of the narrative of American history and the greater Atlantic World; that they developed within and because of greater worldly events; and that they shared many qualities with free mixed-race peoples in other parts of the American continent. In short, these New Orleans Creoles raised their status, forged a unique identity, and positioned themselves socially beyond the parameters of Berlin’s conclusions. Wegmann argues that these Creole people of New Orleans were just as “American” as other elements of the country—and consequently, equally deserving of consideration within the greater historical narrative and history of the Atlantic World. Wegmann’s argument is divided among five chronological chapters in which he examines the New Orleans Creole community through significant changes they experienced in the world around them and how they subsequently met those changes as a community. In chapter one, the origins of this community under French rule are explored. Significant to Wegmann’s analysis here is the fact that the Creole population of the nineteenth century had its roots in the conscious manipulation of race and power within the confines of French authority. For example, Wegmann asserts that “free women of color during the colonial period utilized sex and race to carve out [a] niche in the socioracial order” (p. 12) when they chose to have relations with prominent Frenchmen. Combined with the French language lacking a word for a free person of color until 1774, the free mixed-race community under French rule was able to lay a substantive foundation for future generations. Following the transition to Spanish rule, chapter two describes how the Creole population continued to promote its own interests through a manipulation of the race science that accompanied Spanish rule. In particular, the *Casta* system of racial hierarchy allowed middle-class Creoles to develop their identity and use their light skin and free heritage for social elevation. With the transition to United States authority, as seen in chapter three, the Creole community in New Orleans further embraced new cultural mores to further elevate its status. By embracing white culture and becoming propertied, New Orleans Creoles were able to elevate and assert themselves as uniquely different. “To New Orleans white society, [Creoles] were not colored, black, or negro. They were something else altogether . . . ” (p. 61). As the status of this Creole community climbed in the years following the War of 1812, it began imitating white American society by refining its middle class through avenues like fashion, family, and socializing. Like other free black communities across the country, in their own way, New Orleans Creoles were using class con-

sciousness and controlling the way they were perceived in society to improve their station and demand legitimacy within greater American society. Subsequently, Wegmann's final chapter explores the ways in which the Creole community reacted to the American Colonization Society and repatriation efforts during the nineteenth century. To this end, Wegmann explores the nuances that existed between various mixed-race communities in different parts of the country and their motivations to leave or stay. By the eve of the Civil War, New Orleans Creoles had undergone a process of Americanization, and saw their home not abroad in Africa, but locally, where they had grown and cultivated a uniquely American Creole culture for over a century. Through his analysis, Wegmann cogently articulates the nuanced history of New Orleans Creoles through over a century of political and social change. He situates the community within the greater narrative of United States history and the Atlantic World, and in so doing, recontextualizes important political and cultural historical developments. Wegmann has not only made a valuable contribution to the greater historiography of mixed-race communities in the United States, but also provided a social history that is applicable to a plurality of historical fields—from colonial to Antebellum America, and beyond to the greater history of the Atlantic World.

--Travis C. Perusich

Katrina: A History, 1915-2015. By Andy Horowitz. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2020 Pp. 281, introduction, notes, acknowledgments, index. \$36.00, hardcover)

Whether the author of this Barcraft Award winner intended to create irrefutable justification for the paradigm shift toward prioritizing vulnerable



populations in emergency management, it appears he has done so while also adding a scandalous historical context that public officials cannot afford to ignore. Andy Horowitz illuminates the need for such drastic shifts, and their complex challenges, a century in the making with *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015*. It pulls no punches assessing Katrina's aftermath, but also brings perspective from the detrimental impacts of commercial dredging on Gulf Coast marshlands and broken promises to share the extracted wealth for a better future, all of which suffer in the name of disorganization, disaster opportunism, segregation, and outright lies. Public policymakers, his-

torians, and students can apply these assessments of both the good, but mostly the bad, lessons from Katrina. At times undeniably demoralizing, the writing seems designed to provoke meaningful change with an infuriating narrative that spurs its readers to action. In recounting one man's protest dating back to New Orleans' ill-begotten flood control plan of 1927, Horowitz personifies decades-long warn-

ings and bitter debates in disaster policy that seem to overlook the people most vulnerable to catastrophic change. “But four decades after the state engineers directed the Mississippi River to flood his house, the catastrophe was not yet over for him. Disasters can seem acute, his protests re- mind, but their causes are long in the making and their effects last a very long time” (p. 23). In another example, a familiar refrain, levee failure is attributed directly to cost-saving measures enacted over time by the Army Corp of Engi- neers. In a much less commonly understood parlance, however, the author goes on to pain- stakingly underscore years of indirect cause that arguably became too overwhelming for any gov- ernment agency or citizen group to overcome. Looking back over nearly a century of unfettered and unbalanced growth in the city, Horowitz un- derscores the vulnerability of certain geographic areas and populations in New Orleans from the underappreciated lens of culture and heritage. The early pages paint an intriguing picture for those unfamiliar with New Orleans’ political history. Even if one knows the Big Easy inti- mately, there are throughlines to discover that public officials and the social sciences grapple with today. A century of half-measures leaves New Orleans vulnerable to storm surge, and more than two centuries of racism and segrega- tion culminates in an irreparable relationship be- tween New Orleans and many of its African American citizens. These realities illustrate the political backdrop when Hurricane Katrina makes landfall. Calls to abandon certain parts of the city in the wake of the 2005 storm are echoed throughout, but the book also reminds us that New Orleans has been sinking for a hundred years as the result of dredging for transportation, and later oil. Readers may recall pleas to save the irreplaceable culture of New Orleans against calls to finally let the city slip into the gulf after Hur- ricane Katrina. What they may not remember are warnings from scientists thirty years prior of this inevitable result, which came alongside concerns from citizens that the city did not seem to be able to protect one area without flooding another. “Despite the concerns raised at the public hear- ing, the Army Corps announced in August 1975 that it would proceed with the project as de- signed” (p. 89). The author extends both practi- cal and cultural concerns from the paved streets into the swamp itself, linking the ecosystem as in- terdependent in regard to flood protections sur- rounding the city. “But in 2005, forty years later, a plodding bureaucracy and piecemeal federal ap- propriations process had left the hurricane pro- tection system unfinished” (p. 129). The inevitable storm surge floods wealthy and poor alike in neighborhoods borne of drained marsh, only for the segregation still upheld by tradition and economics to rear its ugly head during a recovery that is ongoing to this day. Unflooded low-income housing is de- nied occupancy so that it can be razed, and dis- placed citizens are outvoted regarding the future of New Orleans before they are allowed back into the city of their heritage. The underbelly of Lou- isiana politics is again brought front and center in a 1915 reboot for the modern era, and readers are pointedly reminded of what is at stake. “People died for no other reason than lack of or- ganization” (p. 124). If the history leading to this point is a sad reminder of how far we have come, the recounting of Katrina’s aftermath in this book is a gut-check for the wounds left to heal. In these pages, one sees many examples where unregulated progress and profit motive ig- nore intangible concepts like culture and tradi- tion. While it is hard to place monetary value on such things, to ignore them is to ignore the people they belong to, and, in many cases cov- ered here, to deceive them. “Public efficiency and

private profits were difficult to reconcile, because a totally efficient system of delivering public funds to individuals would have yielded no private profits at all" (p. 150). As with the flood water, the funding only seems to move from one place to another, never lifting all boats. The disregard for sustaining the culture of New Orleans, or more accurately the people who created it, is juxtaposed with not only the occurrence of disaster but our response to it. "As a process for change, tradition is the opposite of disaster, in which the present seems to arrive out of nowhere" (p. 189). The main characters in this work are those who would stifle such tradition to further their own self-interests in both 1915 and in 2005. *Katrina: A History, 1915-2015* does not let us forget this fact, and offers no glossy finish for the prejudices that often underpin such thought. Anyone wishing to effect change for disasters like Hurricane Katrina will find here the political realities, historical injustice, and all manner of obstacles they may face along the way.

--Jon Carvell

The Continuing Storm: Learning from Katrina. By Kai Erikson and Lori Peek. (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2022. Pp. xv + 142, prelude, postlude, acknowledgments, notes, index. \$32.14, paperback)

Sociologist Kai T. Erickson observed in 2014 that Hurricane Katrina would be the most telling storm of our era, not just because of the damage it inflicted upon people and property, but because of what it revealed about our culture and ourselves. Social scientists were eager to learn more about the human costs of the disaster and went to work soon after the storm passed, sifting through reams of data, striving to make sense of it. Among this group were some of America's best disaster researchers, their colleagues, and students who lent support. The best of this work appeared on The Katrina Bookshelf, the most comprehensive social science coverage of a disaster found anywhere in the literature. *The Continuing Storm* is the capstone of this series. This book is a somber reflection, thoughtful, with a measured academic tone. Yet, simultaneously, it is a brutally honest story of the abuse suffered by some of New Orleans' most vulnerable citizens. It is a short, powerful read, essential for those who want to deeply understand what happened before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina. At the center of the narrative are the poor, mostly Black residents of New Orleans, some elderly, handicapped, and medicine-dependent, stuck in Katrina's path and unable to escape the storm's wrath. They died in floodwaters that reached as high as their attics; they died swimming through toxic sludge, trying to find something to hold on to as the water inched higher; they died on bridges and overpasses, waiting for help that was late in coming; some died in the filthy squalor of the Superdome and the Convention Center, dehydrated, hungry and without medication. Those that survived were hastily loaded on buses or planes, headed for unknown destinations, separated from some of their family, and after a while living in a new place, feeling like utter outcasts in their new environment. For these souls, the hurricane is not over; it is a continuing trauma. Wherever these survivors go, so goes Katrina. The book succeeds in reorienting our perceptions of time and space as it relates to the hurricane. As humans, we like to corral nature into

specific, often short, timeframes. For example, as a meteorological event, Katrina was short-lived; it began on August 25 near south-east Florida and ended on August 29 over east Mississippi. The storm surge abated. The floodwaters in the geographic bowl that is central New Orleans eventually receded. But human suffering will last a lifetime. Coastal towns like Venice, Buras, and Waveland were completely destroyed, having to build back from scratch. Memories of what was lost and the grief about those things have no official time stamp or expiration date. Regarding space, we like clear geographic boundaries that we can identify and point to on the map to remember those who suffered in that part of New Orleans, such as the Lower Ninth Ward and St. Bernard Parish. But in the travels of those displaced from those places, Katrina lives on. Wrenched from their homes and made to feel unwelcome to return, Katrina followed them wherever their diaspora took them. Meanwhile, among New Orleans' elite business crowd, there was jubilation as they witnessed the storm's devastation. As affluent people living on higher ground, they suffered less damage and had the resources to get out of town as the storm passed. Surveying the flooding in the poorer, primarily Black district of New Orleans, some expressed thanks to God for the "gift." The storm did what they always wanted to do but could not. Their town's "criminal element" had just boarded buses and was now gone. The city would gentrify and do all possible to make it nearly impossible for the displaced to return. Possibly this slight was the lowest depth of humiliation for those in the diaspora, to be unwanted by their city. They were uprooted from their homes, treated like garbage, shuttled away, and barred from returning. The New Orleans business crowd wanted a smaller, taller, and whiter post-Katrina city, and they got all that. It may be true that no one reads Herbert Spencer anymore, as Talcott Parsons once wrote. But these business types wore their Social Darwinism on the sleeves of their freshly pressed suits. The "unfit" of their town had just been expelled. We learned from Katrina that Social Darwinism was stitched into the fabric of New Orleans and much of white America, which stood by silently watching. The Continuing Storm reveals the limits of a neo-liberal democratic state in the current age to protect its citizens after a disaster. In this pro-free market, pro-business way of governing, the responsibility for disaster preparedness lies squarely on the shoulders of the individual family unit and local communities. Individual responsibility rules the day. The fittest will survive and the rest will fail. The federal government and state governments can help with infrastructure projects or resiliency initiatives and some limited forms of aid. Still, it is not their job to replace your home or to make you whole again. The political system insists that to receive substantial assistance, your local representatives must continually approach the halls of Congress, hat in hand, to beg for more relief money and prove that your district needs it—an exhausting, years-long process. Louisiana now encourages families to have an action plan before the next storm arrives in the Gulf. That plan involves adequate insurance, savings, a roadworthy car, a "go" kit to save time, and a place to meet family members during an evacuation. Unfortunately, many of the vulnerable poor in New Orleans lack access to these resources today just as they did in 2005.



--Stan Weeber

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