

women's studies, Jewish studies, and ethnic studies in general—because the issues dealt with here apply to other ethnic groups as well. My recommendation is to use this book in conjunction with other sources (also quoted by Schloff) that deal more in depth with the experiences of individual rural Jewish families: for example, *Dakota Diaspora: Memoirs of a Jewish Homesteader* by Sophie Turnoy Trupin (University of Nebraska Press, 1988) and *Rachel Calof's Story: Jewish Homesteader on the Northern Plains* edited by Sanford Rikoon (Indiana University Press, 1995). Although prairie dogs are, indeed, **not** kosher, Schloff's book offers much food for thought and provides some excellent examples that can be plugged into a number of theoretical frameworks dealing with ethnic identities, social adaptations, and cultural continuities.

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**Brooks Thomas, ed. *Plessy v. Ferguson: A Brief History with Documents*. (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997). 205 pp, \$19.95 paper.**

One hundred years ago the Supreme court of the United States of America ruled in the case of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* that "separate but equal" was the law of the land. The high court finally decided in the 1954 case of *Brown vs. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas*, that *Plessy* was unconstitutional. In his delivery of the *Brown* decision Mr. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote: "We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of 'separate but equal' has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal."

During 1996, NAES CU-Boulder's Ethnic Studies Department, Howard University, and other organizations and institutions used this centennial anniversary to revisit that infamous case and examine its lasting legacy. Brook Thomas' book is a welcome addition to works analyzing the Court's reasoning.

Thomas presents the case of Homer Plessy, a man defined by blood quantum as "seven-eighths white," but according to the laws of Louisiana at that time was "colored." After being arrested after refusing to remove himself from an intrastate Jim Crow railroad car, Plessy pleaded his case before Judge John Howard Ferguson, a carpetbagger from Massachusetts. After losing the case before Ferguson, Plessy took it before the Supreme Court. The Court's decision purposely placed African Americans in a permanent second-class status reminiscent of the 1857 *Dred Scott vs. Sandford* case. In the latter, Chief Justice Roger Taney's opinion declared the following about Black people:

They had for more than a century before been regarded as beings of an inferior order, and altogether unfit to associate with the white race, either in social or political relations; and so far inferior, that they had no rights which the white man was bound to respect . . .

Not only does Thomas effectively explain the legal implications of the *Plessy* case, but he also supplies pertinent supplementary information about its social implications. Besides linking *Plessy* to *Dred Scott*, he appropriately links it to the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and 1875, the Civil War constitutional amendments (13th, 14th, and 15th), the 1873 *Slaughter-House Cases*, and the 1886 *Yick Wo vs. Hopkins* case. He reveals Homer Plessy's role as a planned challenge to Louisiana's 1890 provision for separate intrastate railway carriages for whites and colored passengers, and how white novelist and lawyer (Plessy's attorney) Albion Winegar Tourgee became involved. Thomas provides a brief biography of each member of the Court and significantly, how the "color blind" metaphor has been revised from its original application to be used against attempts at Black strides.

Thomas also includes opinions by leading white and African American figures of the time, and responses by the press and law journals. He provides important links to discriminatory cases affecting other groups of color: Native Americans and Asians. *Plessy* was not merely a "black" case. Though Thomas does not delve into this aspect, it became part of the U.S. arm of imperialism in the Philippines, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and Cuba. This accessible work can provide important information to anyone attempting to understand *Plessy* and its various ramifications.

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