

type of beauty. The work does contribute narratively to the body of literature about the black female experience in America including such major works as *The Black Woman Cross-Culturally*, edited by Filomina Chioma Steady, and *Women of Color in U.S. Society*, edited by Maxine Baca Zinn and Bonnie Thornton Dill.

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Leland T. Saito. *Race and Politics: Asian Americans, Latinos, and Whites in a Los Angeles Suburb*. Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1998. Part of the Asian American Experience Series edited by Roger Daniels. 250 pp., \$49.95 cloth, \$21.95 paper.

This book is a testament to the maturity of ethnic studies curricula. They were developed by activist students, primarily of Asian, Native American, African, and Latino ancestry, and by faculty members who had no formal training in ethnic studies because the discipline did not exist. The faculty who participated in the creation of ethnic studies curricula were scholars with an interest in this emerging field or people who by dint of race were deemed to have interests in the field. By training they were primarily historians, English department faculty, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and art and drama department faculty. There was no shared corpus of work, methodology, or background among them.

Professor Saito, whose PhD is in sociology, has been trained in a university system where fully articulated ethnic studies curricula are widespread. Over thirty years of scholarship, teaching, and conceptualization undergird his work, and it shows. This is a solid academic work, utilizing approaches, methods, perceptions, and information that were not available thirty years ago. As the discipline was designed to be, his work is thoroughly interdisciplinary. He draws broadly on women's

studies, ethnic studies, sociology, history, political science, anthropology, and Latino studies, Asian American studies, Native American studies, and Black studies as well.

One product of the years of research the author is heir to which he masterfully articulates is a rich, complex, and dynamic conceptualization of ethnicity itself. He tells us, "Research on racial and ethnic formation recognizes that identities are fluid and highly contested rather than static and fixed..." (3). He examines concepts such as panethnicity, "... the ties and cooperation among groups of different national origins, such as Japanese and Chinese Americans, that lead to the formulation of more inclusive identities - in this case as Asian Americans" (2).

Panethnicity, he explains, "... demonstrates ... individuals possess more than one identity, and multiple levels exist simultaneously" (5). His focus on ethnicity, aptly, is not only on people of color. One of his principal subjects is, "... the connection between whiteness and the construction of identities among racial minorities ... " (4). Defining and tracing whiteness, its material, ideological, social, and political roles, is one of the book's major themes.

Professor Saito concentrates on organization building, coalitions, and alliances among Asian Americans, and among Asian Americans and Latinos in the San Gabriel Valley, east of Los Angeles. He also examines coalitions involving whites, but in most instances whites are oppositional to the coalitions he studies. The study scarcely touches people of African descent as they constitute only 1% of the Valley population. The study is, nevertheless, deeply informed by studies of the Black experience in the United States.

The setting is significant because the San Gabriel Valley contains the fastest growing Asian population in the country and has the highest proportion of Asians of any major metropolitan area in the United States. This concentration of Asians is embedded within a much larger Latino population. Saito gives the most attention to the years 1988–1992.

The author does an admirable job of describing, explaining, and providing specific examples of the complexity of each population of color he describes. He bases his work on an approach he labels, "critical ethnography." Specifically, he

emphasizes ethnographic and participant-observer research. In addition to examining effects of culture and structure on politics, this approach enables him to look at, “. . . the details of everyday life . . .” (5). These, he says, “link the micro-level with the macro-level . . .” (5-6).

Through the explication of his basic constructs, a number of historical and demographic discussions, and an interesting array of case studies, all enriched by personal observations, he makes a powerful case that race and ethnicity play a major role in Valley politics. He looks at community organizations and political campaigns. He examines specific decisions made by governments. He looks at how people interact in their daily lives as well as their collective memories. He makes intelligent use of exit polls. His analysis suggests that race is likely to play a significant role any place in the country where the population of color is large enough to contest white dominance.

As powerful and illuminating as his conceptualizations are, however, he is not clear about what he means by race or ethnicity. Indeed, he uses the terms interchangeably, making no distinction between them, and never discussing whether such a distinction might or might not be important. Also, while he does not assume a monolithic white culture, and gives some indications that it might not be, he takes his examination of white cultural diversity no further than such hints. As a result, white culture—aside from its privileged and dominant presence—remains insubstantial, contributing little to the richness of the analysis. Nor has he fully realized his use of personal observations. While they do provide touches of “everyperson” to the narrative, he has not worked out how to use them systematically enough or fully enough to overcome their anecdotal appearance.

These demerits, however, are trivial compared to the value of the work. The book makes an important contribution to our understanding of ethnic diversity in the U.S., to the role of race in politics, especially at the local level, and it offers a grounded vision of the possibilities for racial coalitions in politics, a template for action. This is good scholarship. It is also community-linked. This kind of scholarship couldn't have been produced thirty years ago. It is a new scholarship, a product of

a new discipline. It is a marker that ethnic studies has indeed come of age and that its future beckons brightly.

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E. San Juan, Jr. *Beyond Post Colonial Theory*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998). \$35.00.

This is an important book for many reasons. Much like Michael Omi and Howard Winants' *Racial Formation in the United States* and San Juan's previous book *Articulations of Power in Ethnic and Racial Studies in the US*, this latest enterprise captures much of the drama and trauma that inequality of power produces when race, ethnicity and class are knotted at its core.

This is not a simple book to read; however San Juan has very clearly defined his terms and explained his use of words in context. There is a succinct pattern of explanations and critiques that allows the versed (and not-so-versed) in post-modern jargon to get at the heart of the matter. San Juan begins by stating that "post colonial theory's claim to institutional authority deserves careful scrutiny for the questions about the knowledge, power and value it rehearses." He adds..."Of pivotal importance are the questions of identity, temporality and singularity articulated with-in" and goes on to address the importance of "agency and history." He defines his use and understanding of the term "post colonial" so that by the end of the introduction, we are all on the same page with similar understandings.

Post colonial theory is to my mind, more than a cultural or literary phenomena limited to those who have undergone the colonial experience. That experience, a relation of conqueror and conquered, is, in fact universal..., Like post-modernism, post-coloniality marks an epochal shift of sensibility, a mutation in the expectant structure of feeling among the intellegencia of the former colo-