

MICHAEL KIMMEL. *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2013). 314 pp., \$26.99 (cloth), \$16.99 (paper).

A well-established sociologist of masculinities, Michael Kimmel, in his work, *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*, offers a highly accessible journey through the oxymoron that white men are oppressed by disenfranchised women and minorities. Moreover, *Angry White Men* argues that their pain and rage is legitimate, though the direction of their anger is not “true.” While attacking those with less social capital offers an easier target than the neoliberal policies of the powerful, this process denies the solidarity which could threaten the status quo. Instead, their pain becomes self-fulfilling as these men perpetuate the very injustices that feed their now impotent anger. In contrast, Kimmel argues that by correcting biased “inputs,” such as racism and sexism, a new American Dream could produce the social, political, and economic equity that would defuse their anger. Thus, *Angry White Men* seeks to prove that the refusal of some white men to accept increasing gender and racial equity is not a moral question alone, but their own impediment as well.

In the introduction, Kimmel notes that while many white men embrace growing equity, this reactionary anger reaches beyond the American fringe. As a result, the theory and delivery of *Angry White Men* seems less a report of scholarship, but intends rather to persuade a general audience that feminism, and equity more broadly, is (still) our society’s best hope. As such, Kimmel weaves together an expansive review and analysis (his own interviews and past work included) to foreground the gender and race-specific meanings of such ideas as work, independence, provider, and protector which are present in white men’s anger. In doing so, Kimmel empathically separates legitimate injustice from the rhetoric of nostalgic victimhood, inherent in what he calls “aggrieved entitlement.”

Following a humanizing introduction to *Angry White Men*, Kimmel turns to a discussion of (1) the Right Wing media’s use of coded messaging calculated to trigger shame and transform it into rage, (2) the perpetually relevant and oversimplified case of white male mass murderers, (3) Men’s and (4) Father’s Rights Activists, and (5) the broader epidemic of misogyny and violence. Linking specific cases to general themes, (6) Kimmel next examines the economic underpinnings upon which these men’s gendered and raced pain and anger rest. Indeed, in his discussion of the White (supremacist) Right that follows (7), it is hard to miss the harmonizing of global and domestic extremism responding to the trans-

national reach of neoliberalism. Finally, in the Epilogue, Kimmel briefly examines anger as a hopeful tool for change.

To be sure, *Angry White Men* is an important addition to the study of white men who stake their personal and collective value in the promises of a twentieth century American Dream. Indeed, for many, this access was the reward granted their “European ethnic” grandparents for coming to the aid of whiteness when they assimilated into Caucasia. As a result, it is unmistakable in the interview quotes, and Kimmel’s instructive example of Limbaugh reframing a caller’s pain into anger (pg. 32), that The Dream’s crumbling illusions of fairness and dignity provide the common source of anger that an identity politics of hate can then explain and direct. However, Kimmel’s belief that a reconstituted American Dream founded on social equality can produce economic dignity requires the adoption of this identity-centered framing. Critically, this also obscures the role of The Dream in perpetuating economic and social class inequalities and produces analyses of zero-sum pursuits of privilege instead of twisted efforts to reclaim the dignity and intrinsic value capitalism cannot provide, and to which we are all indeed entitled.

Thus, as both an ethnic study and a call for change, *Angry White Men* would benefit from a clearer critique of the American Dream ideal itself in order to more directly undermine the angry right’s claims. Further, to challenge Dream ideology effectively also requires a more thorough criticism of the left’s embrace of neoliberalism, without which the book seems like an argument for why these men are wrong rather than for understanding and collective struggle. Ultimately, however, *Angry White Men* is a critically important discussion of United States white men’s complex positionalities as the twenty-first century begins, particularly for the accessible nature of the text. Certainly Kimmel is right, the most important contribution a study of aggrieved white men can offer is an accurate analysis of power in which they can identify both the true sources of their pain and their natural allies. *Angry White Men* is an important and significant step toward that vision.

*Reviewed by: Jonathan Grove
University of Washington*