

Donald W. Jackson. *Even the Children of Strangers: Equality Under the U.S. Constitution*. (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992) 282 pp., \$14.95 paper.

Can “separate but equal” really be equal? How do we achieve equality through remedial preferential treatment? Does America’s “meritocracy” dictate inequality? These compelling questions are addressed in Donald Jackson’s *Even Children of Strangers: Equality Under the U.S. Constitution*.

Jackson utilizes numerous Supreme Court decisions to challenge Americans’ quasi-religious faith in the term “equality,” even in the face of gross inequality that touches the lives of almost all Americans. Jackson’s study focuses almost exclusively on the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal protection clause, tracing its judicial history from ratification to its broadened application in answering immigrant, gender, and corporate claims for protection.

Central to Jackson’s thesis is the recent trend of invoking individual-regarding equality to sustain reverse-discrimination claims, undermining the corrective legislation of the 1960s. This legislation offered affirmative action policies as remedial solutions to the group discrimination endured by African Americans and challenged America’s fascination with merit-based equality.

The Court’s decision in *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) christened this renewed faith in individual-regarding equality, interpreting the Fourteenth Amendment to equally protect individuals regardless of past group discrimination. This decision promoted a judicial retreat from affirmative action remedies, demonstrated by Jackson’s discussion of recent employment cases where the Court found in favor of reverse discrimination claims.

*Even the Children of Strangers: Equality under the U.S. Constitution* refers to a book that is primarily concerned with the African American struggle to secure their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment’s equal protection clause. The title is misleading on two grounds. First, African Americans were never “strangers” to the American legal system; they were often the victims and redeemers of it. To imply that African Americans are “strangers” to American legalities is to nullify all their contributions in this country while affirming the misguided notion that America is a “white” nation. This is an unfortunate oversight by Jackson.

Secondly, the subtitle suggests a much broader examination of equality and the United States Constitution. The contents of the book are narrowly confined to a historical interpretation of one clause in one amendment. One only needs to compare this work with

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Derrick Bell's *Race, Racism, and American Law* to comprehend the limits of Jackson's work in reference to his overly inclusive subtitle.

Although the introductory chapters are weighted down with superfluous information, they aptly reduce a variety of legal cases to their simplest form without compromising the complexity of the issues involved. Included is an excellent index, bibliography, table of cases, and notes that help explain some of the legal terminology and case specifics that are not requisite in the body of Jackson's argument but are requisite to understanding the entirety of the cases. The result is a book that accomplishes Jackson's desire to write "an accessible book about a complex subject."

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**Claude Levi-Strauss and Didier Eribon. *Conversations with Claude Levi-Strauss*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991) vvi, 184 pp., \$19.95 cloth.**

This series of conversations between French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss and French journalist Didier Eribon was first published in French in 1988. Happily, it has now been translated into English and can be more widely read in the English-speaking world. It is, in a sense, a guided autobiography, although one gets the impression that Levi-Strauss resists revealing too much of himself to Eribon and his readers. Nonetheless, one gains significant insights into the man and his world in at least two different domains: the personal and the academic. Ethnic studies scholars should find both of interest.

On the personal level, there is a brief but vivid account of his struggle with anti-semitism in France, especially during the 1930s and 1940s. The discussion touches on the racial laws passed in France during World War II, the loss of a teaching job as a result of those laws, American efforts to rescue European intellectuals, and a final escape to New York to wait out the end of the war. Although he doesn't say as much, one senses that his subsequent work on racism draws in part from these experiences.

Of particular academic interest for readers of this journal, Levi-Strauss provides a succinct description of the anthropological stance against racism and of his role in that debate. In particular, he discusses his two UNESCO pamphlets, *Race and History* (1952) and *Race and Culture* (1971), and expounds on some of the issues raised in