



Stephanie Cole, Alison M. Parker, eds. *Beyond Black and White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S. South and Southwest*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004. ix + 144 pp. \$32.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-58544-297-3; \$16.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-58544-319-2.

Reviewed by Amy Meschke Porter (Department of History, Georgia Southwestern State University)

Published on H-SAWH (April, 2006)

## Challenging Definitions of Race in the South and Southwest

This exciting new work came about as a result of the Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lecture Series at the University of Texas at Arlington. *Beyond Black & White* persuasively moves beyond “black” and “white” in its discussion of race in the South and Southwest.

Nancy Hewitt provides an excellent introduction in which she outlines the need for such research on race. Her introduction skillfully ties together the essays and could also stand alone as a chapter. She convincingly makes the case that *Beyond Black & White* is not just about the Southwest but is part of a larger southern story as well. Hewitt outlines several examples in Florida where the population was multicultural, and race was not clearly defined as black or white.

Laura F. Edwards looks at the workings of the legal system in the antebellum South. Edwards analyzes the court cases of two women in North Carolina and South Carolina to show that “racial, gender, and class differences were not as fixed or as polarized as historians now assume” (p. 5). Whereas some scholars have focused on the power of white men over their families and slaves, Edwards finds that there were limits to this white male power.

Edwards argues that while common law “upheld the authority of white propertied men, it also could undercut it by treating them as subjects and accentuating their similarities to those they also ruled” (p. 6). The support of community members sometimes limited white male authority by encouraging dependents to bring cases to court. Edwards’s essay shows that power was not unchanging for white patriarchs in the antebellum South. Set squarely in the South rather than in the Southwest, Edwards’s essay focuses on gender as well as race. With the exception of Sarah Deutsch’s essay, discussed below, the other works in the collection tend to focus almost exclusively on race and ethnicity.

Next, William Carrigan and Clive Webb compare the lynchings of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the United States to the lynchings of African Americans in the country. This important essay finds that the number of Mexicans lynched was less than the number of African Americans lynched, but the percentage based upon population was fairly equal. This work expands the typical story of lynchings in the United States to include victims of another ethnicity, but also challenges the periodization of lynchings in U.S. history. The high number of Mexicans who were lynched in the 1850s and 1870s does not match the periods of increased lynchings of African Americans.

In addition, Carrigan and Webb demonstrate that the methods of lynching and accusations against African Americans and Mexicans differed. The authors argue that the immigrant status of Mexicans made them vulnerable to lynchings, but that wealthy Mexicans could escape mob violence. Also, the U.S.-Mexico border played a role in mob violence against Mexicans in ways that it did not for African Americans. Problems between Mexico and the United States could lead to surges in mob violence, but Mexicans could also use the border to escape violence and could seek the aid of the Mexican government. Mexican American and African-American civil rights groups never united to fight the lynching problem together.

Stephanie Cole examines a southern city—Dallas, Texas—that dealt with an international border. Cole’s essay begins with the story of how difficult it was for census enumerators in 1900 in Dallas to determine race. Cole finds that Texas legislators stopped using the term “colored” in segregation legislation and began to use the term “Negro” so that they could exclude Mexican Americans and immigrants from such legislation if they chose to do so (p. 82). For the same reasons, legislators left the definition of whiteness unclear.

Cole finds that with money and social status some

Mexican Americans were able to avoid segregation laws that did apply to them. Many other immigrants did so even more easily because their numbers were too low to be threatening. For this reason, Chinese immigrants who faced nativism across the country at the time had a malleable status in Dallas because they were few in number. In fact, Cole finds a major interest among wealthy Dallasites in Eastern culture. Cole concludes "That the black-white segregationist logic triumphed for so much of the century to follow should tell us that the framework had powerful appeal, but we should not assume that its victory was inevitable" (p. 91).

Next, Sara Deutsch examines the town of Boley, Oklahoma, in an effort to understand race, citizenship, and gender in the twentieth-century West. Deutsch finds that Oklahoma was on the edge of both the South and the West. Boley had been part of a Creek Indian land allotment that then became an African-American town. In this multicultural area, whites, Indians, and blacks defined race in different ways. Blacks, including Booker T. Washington, tended to ignore the Indian presence because they viewed U.S. citizenship as more valuable to them than Creek citizenship. On the other hand, Creeks valued their own tribal citizenship more than U.S. citizenship. As a result, they did not allow black women to marry Creek men, but they did allow Creek women to marry black men. Children of such couples would be Creeks because the Creeks were matrilineal. Deutsch effectively shows how gender as well as race was a part of this battle over citizenship.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close in Boley,

whites began to use violence and pass segregation laws against blacks in white-controlled areas. Sometimes, the whites would categorize blacks as Indians so that the whites could remove the blacks as part of the "script of Anglo western conquest" (p. 113).

Neil Foley's work picks up where Carrigan and Webb's essay on lynchings ends. Foley examines how Mexican Americans began their fight to be counted as white in the 1930s, when they were first counted in the census as Mexican rather than white. This was the beginning of the strategy that ended in 1980 when Hispanic was added as a category to the U.S. census. Mexican Americans never associated their struggle for citizenship with the African-American civil rights movement. Foley notes that "Many identifying themselves as white and Hispanic, whether consciously or not, are implicated in the government's erasure of the Indian and African heritage of Mexicans" (p. 139). Foley reiterates a point that some of the volume's other contributors make: the real race issue was how to define white, not black.

In *Beyond Black and White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the South and Southwest*, the category of gender could have played a larger role. Regardless, the volume is a major contribution to the study of race and ethnicity in the South and Southwest. The book shows the value of scholars meeting to discuss an important topic. While each scholar's research touches on a narrow region or city, overall *Beyond Black and White* demonstrates that the categories of "black" and "white" were not fixed, nor were they the only ways that southerners and southwesterners defined race and ethnicity.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the list discussion logs at:

<http://h-net.msu.edu/cgi-bin/logbrowse.pl>.

**Citation:** Amy Meschke Porter. Review of Cole, Stephanie; Parker, Alison M., eds., *Beyond Black and White: Race, Ethnicity, and Gender in the U.S. South and Southwest*. H-SAWH, H-Net Reviews. April, 2006.

**URL:** <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11606>

Copyright © 2006 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at [hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu](mailto:hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu).