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John Higham, ed. *Civil Rights and Social Wrongs: Black-White Relations Since World War II.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997. vii + 223 pp. $28.50 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-271-01709-9.

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In October of 1994, the Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, convened a symposium on the state of race relations in the United States. The symposium brought together a range of scholars to explore a variety of contemporary issues, focusing on relations between whites and blacks. The essays were collected into this volume, and the editor, historian John Higham, then added a few more essays to round out the book.

The strength of the book is its accessibility and wide scope. Like most edited volumes, and perhaps most monographs as well, this one is uneven, though my preferences likely reflect an empiricist bias. The book assembles an impressive and varied cast: two historians (Higham and Diane Ravitch), three sociologists (Lawrence Bobo, Nathan Glazer, and Doug Massey), one political scientist (Lawrence Fuchs), two philosophers (Jean Bethke Elshtain and Christopher Beem), a cultural critic (Gerald Early), and a constitutional lawyer (Erwin Chemerinsky). The book is broken down into four parts: "trends in race relations," "affirmative action," "multiculturalism reassessed," and "toward the future." *Civil Rights and Social Wrongs* reflects the goals of the Balch Institute, which are to promote dialogue and understanding and to reach diverse audiences. This being the case, the book is likely to be more useful to the educated general audience, academic dilettantes and undergraduate students than it will be to scholars doing cutting edge research in these areas.

Higham begins the book with an essay that serves as a critical analysis of the rise and fall of the 1960s civil rights movement, as well as an introduction of the volume's articles. The book has a sub-subtitle, "How the civil rights movement led to affirmative action, multiculturalism, and stalemate," and this perspective shows that Higham is not willing to embrace everything that goes by the name of "civil rights" in 1990s America. Higham's essay, necessarily selective, gives a rundown of the social, political and cultural currents of black/white relations from World War II to the present.

Lawrence Bobo, known for his quantitative studies of public opinion on issues of race relations, offers a useful and provocative synthesis of some of the many polls on racial attitudes and acceptance of civil rights and related policies. Bobo wants to explore the limits of white tolerance and acceptance of civil rights, and in doing so, assess the views of race pessimists such as Derrick Bell and Andrew Hacker, both of whom believe that white racism is alive and the dominant fact of contemporary race relations. Bobo's review of the evidence shows that while "the available data suggest that the United States has experienced a genuine and tremendous positive transformation in racial attitudes," it remains the case that a "less extreme, absolute, and all-encompassing" racial discrimination limits black opportunities in economic, political and social pursuits (p. 34). Bobo does not simply make the familiar distinction between Americans' support for civil rights in principle but not in practice. He suggests the concept of "laissez-faire racism" to explain the current state of race relations. Laissez-faire racism "involves a staunch rejection of an active role for government in undoing racial segregation and inequality, an acceptance of negative stereotypes of African Americans, a denial of discrimination as a current problem, and attribution of primary responsibility for black disadvantage to blacks themselves" (p. 42). Polls document the persistence of negative stereotypes of blacks and their connection to views toward policy. For example, "The more negative stereotypes a person holds about blacks, the less likely he or she is to support affirmative action policies" (p. 41). Bobo also finds that "antiblack attitudes are significant correlates of opposition to social-welfare-type policies" (p. 52) and argues that "The linkage in the minds of many white Americans between black culture and the problems of family dissolution, welfare dependency, crime, failing schools, and drug use may be setting the stage for a new period of deep retrenchment in civil rights and social welfare provision" (p. 35). While much evidence is available for Bobo's interpretation, I wanted to see how he would

interpret alternative evidence, such as the support that Americans show for certain welfare programs (for example, Headstart).

On the heels of Bobo's essay is a piece by Lawrence Fuchs on "The Changing Meaning of Civil Rights," a semi-autobiographical account of a familiar story: a northern liberal works for civil rights in the early and mid-1960s, but gives less support as civil rights transforms into affirmative action, bilingualism, majority-minority districting, etc. Fuchs describes the history of the change and his personal accounts give freshness to some familiar criticisms against such policies. Positioned immediately after the Bobo essay, however, the reader will likely wish that Higham would have had Fuchs and Bobo integrate each other's points into their respective chapters. Bobo does not give attention to the distinctive features of affirmative action and related programs that so trouble classical liberals like Fuchs (e.g., the policies can be divisive, do not have clear limits, and give benefits to too many groups), and Fuchs does not give sufficient weight to continuing discrimination, seeing it (in the employment arena) as mainly a problem of teen-agers: "White and other employers often have difficulty distinguishing between street kids, who they think will not stay on the job or will do it badly, and other youngsters who will make good employees … We have got to do a better job of finding out why job-training programs are not more effective and the extent to which there is real discrimination in hiring and how to reduce it" (p. 81).

Chemerinsky's effort, "Making Sense of the Affirmative Action Debate," is a positive contribution and filled with good sense.[1] He points out that there are several goals of affirmative action, and several different types of policy that can go by that name. "A meaningful discussion of affirmative action," he argues, "must be particularized, focusing on the specific types of actions that are permissible under certain circumstances" (p. 87). My only complaint is that in his long list of goals of affirmative action (e.g., remedying past discrimination, enhancing diversity, providing role models), he omits the primary reason government bureaucrats came to the policy, which was to prevent present discrimination from occurring.

Doug Massey's piece serves as a nice summary of arguments made in his influential book with Nancy Denton[2] and elsewhere. His basic message is not a happy one: "Residential segregation by race is an embedded feature of life in the United States that is deeply institutionalized at all levels of American society, and as long as high levels of racial segregation persist, black poverty will be endemic and racial divisions will grow" (p. 103). High-income blacks, Massey shows, tend to be just as segregated as low income blacks–an astonishing fact. He neatly breaks down the dynamics of the processes that lead to this segregation. These processes involve government policies, real estate agents and landlords, and common citizens. In this area of life, discrimination has been amply documented, and few dispute its existence, since "audit" or "tester" studies (where otherwise equal blacks and whites are sent looking for housing at the same places and their experiences compared) continually show discriminatory patterns. Massey points out that "[T]he severity of housing discrimination is such that blacks are systematically shown, recommended, and invited to inspect far fewer homes than comparably qualified whites" (p. 109). To his credit, Massey suggests several policies to mitigate the problem, including Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) assistance to local fair-housing organizations, a permanent testing program and a permanent staff at HUD to examine lending data for discriminatory treatment of black loan applicants.

Nathan Glazer seeks to explain the rise of multiculturalism, or the "awareness that the language we use, the points of view we hold, may hurt and outrage others" (p. 121). He sets up the puzzle by pointing out that, in contrast to affirmative action, which was pushed forward by presidents, had a legal basis, received congressional approval and was the subject of numerous court struggles, "Multiculturalism is something that is truly happening in the culture, primarily in schools and colleges" (p. 123). Both became "norms" to some extent, but multiculturalism's development, happening as it did without high profile or politically powerful advocates, is much more mysterious.

Part of Glazer's answer is that advocates of multiculturalism, as with affirmative action, had the high moral ground due to its connection to civil rights: "I believe a key basis for the strength of the multicultural movement in education, despite its various sillinesses, is that, certainly more than its opponents, it represents still the civil rights cause" (p. 126). Glazer correctly points out that despite the "multi," this kind of education has never been meant to aid everyone, certainly not European immigrants. Glazer argues that multiculturalism arose because black progress stalled in the mid-1970s, and when support for busing declined, advocates turned to multicultural education to raise the academic performance of blacks. Women, gays and lesbians later became involved, a development that Glazer candidly admits is more difficult to explain.

Three other essays in the book are more contemplative. Diane Ravitch argues for a civic culture that is at once based on Americans' commonality but also encourages toleration of difference. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Christopher Beem make a related point, that "we cannot be different all by ourselves" (p. 156), and similarly stress the delicacy of balancing interests in diversity and unity. Gerald Early's "Meditation on the Meaning of 'Diversity' in the United States" covers much ground in a discussion of the new self-consciousness of non-whites in America. All three essays offer food for thought and further discussion, but my own bias is that more facts should have been included. Public opinion on American cultural pluralism would have been illuminating, and I wanted a citation for Early's claim that "many recent Asian immigrants" believe blacks are not fit for American citizenship and "therefore ought to go back to Africa" (p. 168).

Higham's "Coda" closes the book, and makes the argument that there were three Reconstructions in America, coinciding with the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War II, and the years after each. Higham's argument, that "war expanded the choices that black people could make"(p. 180) is provocative and a similar thesis receives much fuller treatment in a forthcoming book by Philip Klinkner with Rogers Smith.[3] Higham ends the collection by decrying the cynicism that "has ravaged belief in an inclusive national community" and declares "It is time for Americans to make richer use of their deeply divided but nonetheless inspiring heritage" (p. 189).

The collection is a thoughtful contribution to debates on race relations in the United States, serving especially well as an introduction. I would have preferred the essays to engage each other more, but in its moderate, concerned, critical tone, *Civil Rights and Social Wrongs* is the sort of bipartisan product one hopes we will see from President Clinton's controversial race relations commission.

Notes:

[1]. Full disclosure: Chemerinsky's comments are very similar to points I have made in my essay, "Affirmative Action: Some Advice for the Pundits," in *American Behavioral Scientist* 41 (1998, April): 877-885.

[2]. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

[3]. Philip A. Klinkner with Rogers Smith, *The Unsteady March: The Rise and Decline of America's Commitment to Racial Equality* (New York: The Free Press, forthcoming).

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