

American Routes: Racial Palimpsests and the Transformation of Race by Angel Adams Parham

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generic experience, when the causes and aftermaths of displacement vary immensely. Similarly, Oliver's presentation of humanitarianism's history presents a straight line between Western political thought and present-day "carceral humanitarianism" without acknowledging any alternative histories that cut across regional traditions or divides. And yet, such histories do exist. For example, contrary to Oliver's brief discussion of humanitarianism and Afro-Asian decolonization (51–2), a great deal of humanitarian work with refugees in Southern Africa during the late twentieth century took sides in the region's political struggles, forging new humanitarian ideas across Cold War and global North-South divisions.

One might argue that these shortcomings in Oliver's work reflect the limitations of the genre in which she writes. Indeed, how much attention can one offer to the complexity

of refugee experience and histories in such a short, accessible text, published in a series committed to "thought-in-process" rather than "finished books" (i)? Regardless, I believe that even a text such as this one would do well to discuss the relationship between universalizing refugee representations and particular refugee histories. In so doing, the author might not only deepen her analysis of the origins of "carceral humanitarianism" but also provide further insight into how we may move beyond this condition through attention to the contexts wherein refugee hosts are called to be hospitable.

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American Routes: Racial Palimpsests and the Transformation of Race



Angel Adams Parham

New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, 296 pp.

American Routes, by Angel Adams Parham, offers an insightful look into the historical development and contemporary vestige of overlying, competing registers of race emerging from and interconnected with migratory flows. Considering both black and white St. Domingue/Haitian refugees and their Creole descendants in Louisiana, Parham comparatively assesses immigrant integration within a multilayered racial system, as a process perforated by transhistorical complexity, variability, and resistance. The book centralizes race as a fundamental dimension of immigrant integration, and, in this way, Parham's work cogently brings into critical dialogue the field of migration studies and the sociology of race and racism.

Anchoring her work in time and space, Parham crafts what she describes as a racial palimpsest approach to explicate the intricacies of long-term racial integration for Creoles in Louisiana. It is here that Parham's most significant contribution is advanced: the analysis of black and white Creoles illustrates how disparate racial systems and logics co-exist through space and time and come to inform immigrant struggles over competing racial frameworks, social integration, and self-identification practices. The racial palimpsest approach offers an ontological posture that assumes racial inequality and racialization as part of the reception and daily struggles of immigrants. The analysis departs from the Eurocentricity of assimilationist frames devoid of racial considerations, often taking the European immigrant as the

primary and relative figure, and instead insists upon the significance of race and racism in shaping the experiences of non-European, non-white immigrants.

A number of methods were employed to collect the data that map racialized integration in Louisiana, including participant observations, in-depth interviews, oral histories, and archival work. The book's rich empirical data reveal how both black and white Creole subjects engage with the logics of two coinciding racial systems, either as a means to maintain a system that helps bolster their well-being or to resist the adverse impacts of another. The core comparative chapters of the book (chapters 3–6) are structured to demonstrate the historical fashioning and enduring fragments of the racial palimpsest in Louisiana, along with the diverse ways in which white and black Creoles negotiate their identities and reinscribe these systems from the nineteenth century into the present.

Following the arrival of St. Domingue/Haitian refugees to Louisiana in the early nineteenth century, the foundational triracial Latin/Caribbean system based on colour, class, and status (white / free black / enslaved black) was reinforced as both white and black refugees sanctioned its social and political dimensions. During this period, white Creoles sought to preserve this triracial system, but eventually the difficulty of retaining their ethnocultural and racial identification as white Creoles was rendered incompatible with the Anglo-American binary standard of whiteness as biological purity. Consequently, integrating into the Anglo-American notion

of whiteness was, in reality, politically advantageous for white Creoles. Free black Creoles, on the other hand, found it imperative to reinforce the triracial system as a means to mitigate the oppressive confines of the black/white binary system under Jim Crow. While social and cultural differentiation from Anglo-American understandings of blackness was vital for black Creoles, it was not until the late twentieth century that black Creoles cautiously began to conceptualize their racial identity in Anglo-American terms. It was the efforts of black Creoles that steadfastly deterred the Anglo-Americanization and consolidation of blackness for many decades in Louisiana. Likened against such historical experiences, Parham's present-day empirical work unearths how white Creole identity exists as merely a historical form of racial identification deriving from the Latin/Caribbean system. Furthermore, she outlines how contemporary experiences for black Creoles continue to be defined by struggles against competing racial interpretations, mainly how to manage their Creole heritage against Anglo-American notions of blackness.

The sheer depth of the genealogical experiences uncovered by Parham attests to the strength of her methodological rigour. Parham skilfully sketches how racial systems were not merely eclipsed by another. Instead, she demonstrates how each system has shaped the identification and integration experiences of black and white Creoles with historically invariable points of vigour. *American Routes* captures the multifaceted ways in which the racial landscape of Louisiana, marked by the existence of a palimpsest, makes accessible alternate and more flexible forms of racial identification and interpretations. Cautiously, however, Parham asks readers not to mistake such adaptability in the racial palimpsest as evidence of the diminution of racial inequality, since racism and white supremacy persist, even in such multilayered contexts, to disadvantage racialized people.

The theoretical offerings of *American Routes* are plentiful. The book's distinctiveness is palpably highlighted by its historically comparative efforts. While Parham's work focuses on the specificities of the route from St. Domingue/Haiti to Louisiana, she also briefly reflects on how contemporary Latin American and Caribbean immigrants similarly offer new racial logics and cultural interpretations, imparting a similar complexity and variability that effectively resists Anglo-American interpretations of race. Parham opens up a pathway to not only consider non-white immigrant experiences across time and space, but also to recognize how racialized integration is affected by the historical, spatial, and political contexts of immigration routes. Immigrants to the United States are framed as arriving with history, culture, and racialized ways of being that do not necessarily dissolve once borders are crossed. Notably, the racial palimpsests approach makes visible the socio-political challenges faced by immigrants of colour as they oscillate between racial systems that are at times incongruous.

What Parham's work most strikingly demands is a centring of the experiences of racialized immigrants as a way to thwart the too often de-racialized frameworks for considering immigrant integration. In addition, this approach departs from the methodologies of critical race theory, which seek to centralize and frame race relations within a black/white binary. By bringing to the fore immigrant struggles to negotiate racial interpretations, categorizations, and logics, the racial palimpsests analytic offers future researchers an innovative framing of immigration more attuned to the dynamic realities of race and racism.

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Voices from the "Jungle": Stories from the Calais Refugee Camp



Calais Writers

London: Pluto, 272 pp.

Statistics can place a sobering spotlight on the global refugee crisis but cannot possibly convey the immeasurable and detrimental impact of the forced displacement of human beings who become labelled "refugees." *Voices from the "Jungle"* is a collection of haunting first-hand accounts of life before, during, and after living in a makeshift refugee camp located on a reclaimed landfill site on the outskirts of Calais,

France. Notorious for its poor living conditions, the infamous Calais refugee camp was home to those fleeing a variety of social and political conditions from all over the world.

At a time when Western media/politics seem to centre on conversations of war/conflict in faraway lands and immigration policy at home, this important book gives voice to the people most affected by, but most often excluded from, the discussion.