

the roles of family and women, race, social and economic class, the impact of war and McCarthyism, civil rights, poverty, and much more. Bodnar concludes that, like American society at large, movie images of ordinary people were never constant: their values and principles evolved within, and were reflective of, the fluidity and evolution of political culture.

Criticism of this work is largely a matter of interpretation, rather than of factual disagreement. It is by nature a theoretical and critical study, and a selective one at that. The range of films investigated is small compared to the universe of movie production over the past six decades. The author does not claim comprehensiveness—an impossible task—but one could debate Bodnar's selection of films for review. For example, a full discussion of film noir would have been appropriate for this work. A truly American genre with a tremendous impact upon movie making, film noir explored working-class issues of post-

war disillusionment, urban malaise, crime, labor, and the fundamental economic and social failings of liberalism and democracy. And scholars could, of course, debate the author's particular interpretations of recent political writings and history.

Such criticisms will not, however, detract from the conclusion that Bodnar has written a fine book. It is a significant work and should be read by those who seek insight into the role of the film industry in mass culture, its interaction with politics and society at large, and its portrayal of the majority of people living in the United States: ordinary working men and women.

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Behind the Gates

Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America

By Setha Low

(New York: Routledge, 2003. Pp. xi, 275. Illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$26.00.)

Recent political debates have focused on the power and function of the public and private economic sectors in determining land use in our suburban nation. The traditional public role in the development process—of providing public infrastructure and pub-

lic spaces—has been transformed under the banner of fiscal conservatism and as a reaction to unwanted sprawl. Additionally, fear of crime and of the erosion of property values has promoted the insularity and anti-urbanism manifest in the prolifera-

tion of “gated communities.” *Behind the Gates* abstracts the debate over this trend, demonstrating the folly of the “gated” lifestyle through the analytical insights of an environmental psychologist.

Setha Low, a professor of anthropology and environmental psychology, interviewed householders in New York City, Long Island, and San Antonio. Bridging the anthropologist’s role as a neutral observer with the behavioral scientist’s focus on environmental interaction, she examines the psychological dimension of her subjects’ actions in both demanding and responding to this built environment.

Low’s findings are highly critical of the residents of modern gated communities. As a rule, she finds that they shun pluralism and pursue homogeneity as a way of protecting a lifestyle. Underlying this lifestyle is a racism not unlike the anti-Semitism Low experienced growing up in West Los Angeles. There is also a nostalgic movement, as these baby boom buyers, in their peak earning years, seek the sense of protection they recall from the pre-Levittown neighborhoods of their childhood.

Yet the “security” of gated communities is belied by the fact that the “gate” provides no greater measure of safety than other forms of suburbia. Furthermore, it comes at a cost to basic rights. Condominium and homeowners’ associations act as private, local governments, collecting taxes in the form of mandatory fees and supplying the civic goods of pro-

tection and the amenities of land uses, utilities, and services. Such associations represent a step away from democracy and toward feudalism; they place the power in “freeholders” who, as economist Charles Tiebout characterizes, may all vote with their feet.

Low, the psychologist, concludes that emotion, not reason, is the prime motivation for accepting such a cost. Beyond a small note to history in chapter one, Low is not a historian; she misses a chance to point out the deep roots of this privatization of planning in the evolution from Ebenezer Howard’s early Garden City movement through the Euclidean zoning of the 1920s and the creation of such planned communities as Forest Hills in Queens, New York. Instead, she draws on such recent work as Mike Davis’s study of ethnic spatial segregation and the marginalization of the poor in Los Angeles (*City of Quartz*, 1990), as well as Edward Blakely and Mary Gail Snyder’s *Fortress America* (1997), a more direct study of the gated phenomenon.

To this discussion Low brings insightful observation, based largely on the survey, and impressive empiricism and analysis. Low’s position in the debate over gated communities is apparent. Taking issue both with neo-classical economists, such as Tiebout, and with production homebuilders who favor gates, she remains committed to a land-use policy rooted in democratic pluralism. This book’s combination of style, scholarship, and

significance commands attention from the academic and civic communities.

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sity, and author of “New Urbanist Development Economics,” *Urban Land* (August 2001), and “Smarter Growth: The Way of the Mega-PUD,” *Planning* (September 1999).



Racism

A Short History

By George M. Fredrickson

(Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 2002. Pp. x, 207. Appendix, notes, index. Paperbound, \$14.95.)

In this sweeping, provocative book, George Fredrickson explores the development of racism and anti-Semitism from the Middle Ages to the present. For Fredrickson, the term racism has become so “loaded and ambiguous” that he has taken it as his duty to historicize the term, to explain the way people have thought about race and used it to construct social and cultural hierarchies over the last millennium (p. 151). Racism, in Fredrickson’s view, is not just prejudice—an attitude or set of beliefs—but involves the creation and use of practices, institutions, and structures that allow a dominant group to establish a racial order that they believe reflects the law of nature or God’s will.

To make his case about what racism means and how it developed, Fredrickson divides his book into three chapters. The first covers the long span from the Middle Ages to the start of the eighteenth century. Particularly in the earlier part of that era, most Europeans worried more about people’s religious beliefs than about their skin color or Judaic ances-

try. Being black or Jewish might mark a person as inferior, but it was an inferiority that could be rectified by conversion to Christianity. Racism did not flourish because there was not yet an ideology that led people to see race as inherent and unalterable.

That essentialist ideology developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the rise of what Fredrickson in chapter two calls “modern racism” (p. 49). In one of the West’s greatest paradoxes, the Enlightenment and racism grew together. This was no mere coincidence, but instead revealed the Janus-faced nature of the Enlightenment. On the one hand, this system of rational thinking subverted old hierarchies based on “faith, superstition, and prejudice.” On the other hand, it created new inequalities based on “reason, science, and history” (p. 63). Science, starting with the work of Linnaeus in 1735, began ranking the human species with “acute, inventive” Europeans at the top and “crafty, indolent” blacks and unscrupulous, clannish Jews at the bottom (p. 56).