

While the authors' exploration of *Marquette* and BACPA is thorough, they fail to explicitly examine how stagnate wages led to increased use of credit for millions of Americans. The claim that "personal bankruptcy rates rose because creditors allowed more people onto the path" does not fully scrutinize the complex lived experience of financialization, as indebtedness was often a reaction to increasingly unfavorable labor dynamics (p. 157). However, this small critique illustrates how, like all excellent scholarship, *Bankrupt in America* raises interesting questions that necessitate further research. For another example, can bankruptcy be a way to analyze changing household dynamics as modern consumer culture took hold in the 1920s? The authors explain that working-class families went into debt purchasing household appliances. Were these appliances small luxuries? Or were they necessary when both parents worked, creating a need to replace unpaid domestic labor? In total, *Bankrupt in America* is an outstanding resource that scholars in various fields will be building on for years to come.

*Bankrupt in America* delivers convincing arguments in a concise and easy-to-read narrative. The authors manage to humanize their statistical models through the use of vignettes and profiles of key decision makers. The book covers over one hundred years of history in under three hundred pages, a feat that many busy researchers will appreciate. Finally, the inclusion of much of their digitized data and regression analysis provides a resource that many scholars will find immensely useful. In sum, *Bankrupt in America* is not only a great read but a model of how different fields of inquiry can work together to provide an accurate and interesting analysis of history.

*Nicholas Foster is a PhD candidate who researches 1980s political economy at the University of Chicago.*

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*Class Matters: The Strange Career of an American Delusion.* By Steve Fraser. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018. 304 pp. Hardcover, \$25.00. ISBN: 978-0-300-22150-3.

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Reviewed by Lisa M. Fine

Steve Fraser is an important and prolific historian of class, labor, and capitalism in the United States. His recent works have been in service to a goal of all labor historians since the middle of the twentieth century: to restore the stories of working-class people and the history

of class, class consciousness, and working-class politics, agency, and resistance to the narrative of U.S. history. Fraser's *Class Matters* does this and a great deal more. Writing his book around the time of the election of Donald Trump as president, Fraser is moved to consider how Americans live in a culture of denial about the profound implications of the class divide that surrounds us. "Class is the secret of the American experience, its past, present and likely future. It is a secret known to all, but a source of public embarrassment to acknowledge. It lives on all of the surfaces of daily life yet is driven underground every time its naked self offends cherished illusions about how we deal with each other" (p. 4). He states, "Class has always mattered in America" (p. 13). To prove both the importance of class and its erasure in our history, he provides six chapters/case studies/essays that "take the measure of class where it is least likely to show up." These iconic events, documents, and images, all "deeply lodged in the national imagination," are the settlements of Plymouth and Jamestown in the early seventeenth century, the U.S. Constitution in the late eighteenth century, the Statue of Liberty, the image of the cowboy of the late nineteenth century, the Kitchen Debate between Nikita Khrushchev and Richard Nixon of the mid-twentieth century, and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech (p. 14).

In each of these chapters, Fraser employs recent monographic literature in the field to recount the class-free story surrounding the events and then corrects that story to demonstrate the central importance of class. Therefore, these chapters are as much about the process of historical and historiographical erasure as they are about restoring class to important iconic events and symbols that are often perceived to be devoid of class. Even at the European settlement of British North America, "Class relations were already part of the cargo en route to America and infected the atmosphere even before landfall" (p. 45). On the Constitution, Fraser writes, "Liberty was born amid class conflict. Many of the debates during the convention and especially during the long months and in angry diatribes over ratification that followed were simultaneously about liberty and democracy and about wealth and property" (p. 73). The origin of the Statue of Liberty was a more complicated tale than the contemporary associations of it as a symbol welcoming immigrants to our shores. The image of the cowboy in the mythic West as a romantic, masculine, rugged individualist betrayed his connection to the "commercial mechanism of the global marketplace" in a "real West . . . about business and real estate" (pp. 140–41). The Kitchen Debate, a stand-in for the image of the placidity and consensus of suburbia, satiated with consumer goods and the promise of a mass society, harbored divisions of class and race (and sex. More on that later).

Fraser's recounting of the March on Washington reminds us that it was a March for Jobs and Freedom and that in remembering what occurred that day we should not forget the long struggle for economic rights that was a part of the civil rights movement. He quotes Bayard Rustin: "What is the value of winning access to public accommodations for those lacking the money to use them?" (p. 223)

These chapters include more. Fraser also shares fascinating and often deeply personal recollections from his own life, background, and family to provide a personal dimension to these stories about the silencing and importance of restoring class to our national narrative. These interventions are unevenly deployed. When they work, they are illuminating, and I often wished that Professor Fraser had written a memoir since these windows into his past and activism were not presented in chronological order.

As a working-class/labor and women's/gender historian, I do have one issue with the book—the treatment of women and the uses of gender. This was most apparent in the chapter on the Kitchen Debate that described the dissonance between the image of the suburbs of the 1950s and the reality as "riddled with class divisions, status anxieties, and racial exclusion. So too was it a bastion of patriarchy" (p. 179). Despite mentioning patriarchy, Fraser does not consider rising women's labor force participation rates and labor union organizing during the 1950s. By not considering how contemporaneous and subsequent critiques of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* took Friedan to task for ignoring class and race in her critique of women's place in those suburban kitchens, Fraser missed an important part of his argument. Gendered language also appears in odd ways in the book. For example, in the chapter on the Constitution, Fraser writes, "The U.S. Constitution, at the moment of its birth, and for that matter ever after, has simultaneously functioned as a blueprint for a nation and as a chastity belt for class conflict" (p. 81). Were I Fraser's editor, I might have suggested a different metaphor!

*Class Matters* is an engaging, compellingly written exposition that will be of interest and of use to an audience from professional historians to a wider readership.

*Lisa M. Fine is the chair and professor of history at Michigan State University. She is the author of Souls of the Skyscraper, Female Clerical Workers in Chicago, 1870–1930 (1990) and The Story of REO Joe: Work, Kin, and Community in Autotown, USA (2004), as well as coeditor of the fiftieth-anniversary edition of Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique (with Kirsten Fermaglich; 2013).*

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