

for the La Follette Act earned him the sobriquet “the emancipator of the seamen,” but it was clear his fight for sailors’ rights was limited. As Furuseth testified before Congress, the purpose of the 1915 act was to “keep the sea for the white race” (99).

Racial exclusion would ultimately fracture the maritime labor movement and sap its organizational power. Over the course of the next decade, the merchant marine of the United States and the ISU grew prodigiously as a result of the increased shipping demand during the First World War. Yet in the post war years, labor leaders such as Furuseth continued to operate as if the ISU remained an ethnically homogenous body organized along strict craft union principles. Eventually much of the rank and file would defect for the Industrial Workers of the World while leadership continued its embrace of anti-immigration policies. As Riddell concludes, “They ... chose exclusion and lost” (141).

In an innovative and insightful story of the creation and operation of American empire, Riddell’s work does much to turn attention away from the turn-of-the-century architects of American empire who dominate much of the historical literature. Instead, Riddell highlights the working people who made and attempted to unravel that empire. By doing so, he offers a sobering lesson for modern movements about the costs of choosing racial exclusion over labor solidarity.

## On Democracy and Trash

**Strach, Patricia, and Kathleen S. Sullivan. *The Politics of Trash: How Governments Used Corruption to Clean Cities, 1890–1929*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2023. 246 pp. \$40.95 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1-501-76698-5.**

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By examining the development of municipal garbage collection in the United States, Patricia Strach and Kathleen Sullivan have written a political history of city wide public policy. Focusing primarily on five cities, Saint Louis, New Orleans, Charleston, Pittsburgh, and San Francisco, their book studies the ways local governments addressed the issue of trash collection. The authors chose garbage collection because it is inherently tied to “politics of the everyday, intrinsic to the understanding of political development” (18). The book’s timeline begins in the late nineteenth century, when many cities across the country had grown to a point where traditional ways of disposing trash were no longer effective, and concludes in the late 1920s, when most garbage collection programs were effectively in place. A goal of Strach and Sullivan is to discuss how modern trash pick up began and continues as a municipal undertaking, rather than a duty of the state or federal government. Strach, Professor of Political Science at the University of Albany, New York,

and Sullivan, Associate Professor of Political Science at Ohio University, rely on archived city records, contemporary periodicals, and political and social histories of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. The seven chapters included in the book are organized topically rather than chronologically, and each discusses one aspect of the development of garbage collection, including chapter one, which addresses the book's methodological approach, and the final chapter, which considers potential lessons for scholars of politics.

Strach and Sullivan's primary argument in the book asserts that governments and political leaders pursued undemocratic strategies to develop effective trash policies. Although evolving during the Progressive Era, "many trash programs were not about good governing . . . they were, at bottom, about maintaining and growing political power" (4). According to Strach and Sullivan, three methods—corruption, racial hierarchies, and gender hierarchies—characterize these undemocratic strategies. Despite the growth of a modern sanitation reform movement in the late nineteenth century, city governments often proceeded without the input of experts or reformers. Engineers for example, even if employed by the city, were not necessarily consulted when cities made decisions. Politics trumped science. Groups such as the cabal of businessman known as the "cinch" in St. Louis, and the political ring in New Orleans, dispersed city contracts to political and business allies who either did not have the capacity or the motivation to effectively pick up trash. Even when municipal collection programs were outlined, corruption did not necessarily mean trash was picked up. Conversely, in Charleston and Pittsburgh, "corruption generated the political will in both cities to do something about the trash problem" (96). In Pittsburgh, the political machine stood to profit from productive public works projects. In Charleston, of the city's health department relied on the exploitation of convict (mostly Black) labor for public works to reestablish some semblance of pre-Civil War hierarchy in the aftermath of Reconstruction. In other cities, racial hierarchies were also integrated into garbage collection. Garbage collectors themselves were usually Black men, largely ignored until they went on strike. Corrupt regimes who controlled municipal collection would often deflect criticism onto segregated neighborhoods, underserved by collection, by blaming them for their own trash problem. While women were pushed out of formal governance around the turn of the century, in the household "gender hierarchy was a resource that government could tap into to get its work done" (143). Women's groups were key in instructing the public on proper sanitation in the household and the community. These racial and gender aspects of municipal collection shaped what Strach and Sullivan refer to as the infrastructural power of cities to push citizens into compliance with garbage collection.

The authors do well to discuss how proper trash disposal has become so engrained to city residents—"both ubiquitous and ordinary," they write—yet accomplished historically through unconventional means (166). This is undoubtedly the strength of the book. How and why initial garbage collection programs were initiated, whether ultimately successful or not, is explained in detail and with clarity for the reader. The progression of policy and programs into practice and acceptance is intriguing. The authors, for instance, discuss the monopoly of the Sanitation Guild and Scavengers Protective Union in San Francisco. The scavenger group developed out of necessity in the 1850s and 60s, and its repeated resistance to takeover by the city in the first decades of the twentieth century is strong evidence of "the people, in fact, remaining loyal to their collectors" (183). Another highlight is the uncovering of racial and gender identity within city government policy. Although often not stated in city records, it is constructed through the laws and processes that were outlined to institute and enforce garbage collection. Lastly, identifying

corruption as a method to enact new policies is certainly an achievement of this book, and as the authors describe, “a significant achievement of all those governments” (181).

A case study of several cities does not necessarily mean that the book is a comprehensive examination of municipal politics across the United States. The authors acknowledge that each city is unique, and there is no doubt that America’s public health improved within the Progressive Era, but it is perhaps a stretch to use these examples as evidence of how “local governments transformed sanitation in the United States and, by extension, the nation’s public health” (8). Moreover, the true effectiveness of city wide corruption to develop public policy is debatable. Clearly there are connections to corrupt governments and public policies that benefited those in power, but how transformative were these policies when they ultimately failed, such as in St. Louis and New Orleans? But these are relatively minor criticisms in an otherwise impressive analysis of community politics around the turn of the twentieth century. *The Politics of Trash* convincingly shows how city laws and ordinances can, and were, enacted through untraditional and undemocratic processes to solve an often-overlooked problem.

In their conclusion, Strach and Sullivan consider just how big a challenge it was for cities in the United States to overcome the trash problem in the 1890s. Cities needed both the political will from leaders and “the administrative capacity to collect and dispose of trash” (179). These challenges explain why and how cities developed policies outside of the formal democratic process. Ultimately, though, it would be the ordinary activities of citizens that accepted and implemented modern garbage collection.

## Residential Jim Crow and Class Struggles in the South

**Herbin-Triant, Elizabeth A. *Threatening Property: Race, Class, and Campaigns to Legislate Jim Crow Neighborhoods*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019. xi + 335 pp. \$105.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-231-18970-5; \$35.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-231-18971-2.**

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In this valuable study, Elizabeth A. Herbin-Triant explores white efforts to segregate both urban and rural areas of North Carolina in the early twentieth century. Herbin-Triant looks at legislative efforts to segregate black and white residences and farms, focusing primarily on municipal ordinances in the case of urban segregation and state legislation in the case of rural segregation. Although centered on North Carolina, the book connects the