

while redirecting attention to the complexities of our contemporary, globalized world. Darian-Smith's commentary, the reading lists, and the excerpted material, are all profoundly grounded in material reality, and the urgent need for law to address this material reality.

For all these reasons, *Laws and Societies in Global Contexts* is a book that will be invaluable to many readers. It has the accessibility and compactness of an introductory text, but it also supplies scholars who are established in the field with a valuable compendium of emerging yet influential literature that has found a way to come to grips with the complexities and pluralism of the global perspective needed to address global issues. This book is a finely honed toolkit equipping students, researchers, and teachers to meet Darian-Smith's impassioned call to keep law relevant; showing us how to do so through the lens of a global sociolegal perspective. Thus, while it is customary for a review to identify a weakness, and offer a corrective, and I have been conscientious in attempting to do so, its weaknesses, if any, elude me.

Reference

Sassen, Saskia (2008) "Neither Global Nor National: Novel Assemblages of Territory, Authority and Rights," 1 *Ethics & Global Politics* 61–79.

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Disposable Heroes: The Betrayal of African American Veterans. By Benjamin Fleury-Steiner. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012. 200 pp. \$36.00.

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It is not often that one reads an academic book and is transported into another world, where the words of research subjects dominate, and the stories are left bare to expose the raw, entangled webs that make up people's lives. Benjamin Fleury-Steiner's *Disposable Heroes* accomplishes this task in an eminently readable and engaging book that details how racism and poverty shape the lives of African-American veterans. Fleury-Steiner's decision to excerpt at length from interview transcripts, while eschewing the heavy hand of

theory, results in a book that shows how racial hierarchies are made, created, and sustained, while also decentering the gaze of traditional studies of racial inequality and criminality.

Disposable Heroes begins, according to Fleury-Steiner, “with a simple observation: For a grossly disproportionate number of African-American soldiers, the end of military service signals a return to a largely unforgiving civilian world that has little use for them” (6). Fleury-Steiner details the lives of 30 veterans and uncovers how systematic racism, contemporary mass incarceration, and policies of ghettoization, urban renewal, and integration weave through the life histories of veterans. Joining up, serving, and returning to civil society all are infused with racial hierarchy, experience, and stigmatization, despite the military’s reputation as the most successful story of affirmative action (Moskos 1995). Veterans recalled lives tinged not just with racial inequality, but also the struggles that ensue when returning from war, when serving in military zones, or when discharged without a support network. Veterans in this book must confront the racial exigencies of modern society while also grappling with service related disabilities, recovering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or navigating the complex labyrinth of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits.

Despite these common themes, the experience of racial exclusion emerges not from the larger structural issues that many veterans confront, but from the micro-operation of power. Military service, for many, was a way to be included in the “American dream,” but after service, that inclusion is revealed as partial, contingent, and as yet another site for the encoding of difference. A striking example was of veterans who joined up as a way to “do something with their lives” or “get on the right track,” only to have military experience expose them to trauma that compounded the difficulties of living and surviving in an ongoing racial war at home. While structural racism is certainly demonstrated throughout the book, it is the very real and palpable way that structures are embedded, contested, and recreated through person-to-person interactions that are revealed through the veteran’s words. In almost every case, it was the actions of superior officers, bosses, teachers, and other figures of power that delivered the structures of racism into the lives of the veterans, rather than bureaucratic “governing-at-a-distance” structural constraints.

This insight into the everyday lives of veterans thus also demonstrates what happens when the traditional scholarly gaze is decentered and turned toward how racial inequality impacts those who are not at the outer extremes of the exclusionary racial state—that is prisoners, delinquents, etc. Gerald, one veteran who

could have easily been cast as a “thug,” was instead revealed as a gifted soldier chosen by the military for training and development into an independent operative. Feared by his associates and those in the community, Gerald also poignantly demonstrated the humanity that often coexists with violence. For Gerald and others, the color of skin often resulted in military superiors, colleagues, and police alike interpreting African-American enlisted men as “thugs” even as they were simply, like other recruits, anxious young men transitioning into adulthood. If it was not so true and integral to creating the types of racial hierarchies that the book details so eloquently, it was almost comical to read veterans recount the disjuncture between their own sense of selves and the perceptions of them by whites, a perception that persists even into the military.

Toward the end, Fleury-Steiner offers a preemptive critique of the book that it fails to examine intersectionality, as all of the interviewees are men (and presumably heterosexual). Yet intersectionality is present—not just in the intersection between race, class, and militarism, but in terms of the powers of gender and sexuality that craft specific norms of behavior. One of the striking themes throughout the men’s words is the way racial exclusion intersected with practices of masculinity. Traditional constraints of masculinity were omnipresent in the book. They ranged from stories of romantic relationships with the palpable sense of failure expressed by men for failing to live up to the principles of father, husband, or caretaker to using violence to show that “blacks weren’t chumps” when bussed to white schools. This final point reveals perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of leaving the interviewee’s words to dominate the message of a book—the potential for novel insights, for scholarly discussion to spur greater understandings, and for new readings of data that might not emerge otherwise.

Reference

Moskos, Charles (1995) “Affirmative Action: The Army’s Success . . .,” *The Washington Post*, March 15, p. A19.

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