

Safety Net tells us what happened to DI and SSI, explains why, and shows that it did not have to happen that way. This is what historically informed political analysis is supposed to accomplish, and Jennifer Erkulwater does it well.

Activism Inc.: How the Outsourcing of Grassroots Campaigns Is Strangling Progressive Politics in America. By Dana R. Fisher. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006. 168p. \$24.95 cloth.

The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle.

By T. V. Reed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005. 362p. \$74.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.
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— Doug Imig, *University of Memphis*

These two new books bring welcome perspectives to the study of social movements in America. Reed considers the art of collective action: in terms of both the creative repertoire of activists responding to evolving social and political contexts and the cultural arts that are invoked by and associated with social movements. Fisher's book, meanwhile, sheds light on a second dimension of collective action: the nationwide grassroots canvassing organizations that collect donations and [ostensibly] inform concerned citizens about progressive issues. At first glance, the two books seem to be speaking to aspects of mobilization that are worlds apart. However, their differences help to bring a fuller understanding of the operational field in which social movements are sustained or wither.

Reed examines selected cultural aspects of nine waves of mobilization: songs of the American Civil Rights Movement, the drama of the black power movement, poetry of the women's movement, murals of the Chicano movement, Hollywood's portrayal of the Native American movements of the 1970s, the phenomenon of rock concerts as fund—and consciousness—raisers, the centrality of the graphic arts to the work of ACT UP, the contribution of academic writing to the movement for environmental justice, and the importance of new media to the global justice movement. Reed's selection of movements and specific cultural products associated with those movements was guided by his interest in "movements as sites for the production and reception of cultural texts" (p. xvii). The examples he includes are illustrative, but certainly not exhaustive.

Reed offers brief—at times too cursory—summaries of each movement and then focuses on their cultural dimensions (p. 298). His examples illustrate the ways that art functions within movements to encourage and empower group members; harmonize diverse constituencies; reinforce movement values; express those values to potential recruits, opponents, and undecided bystanders;

enact movement goals; historicize the movement; critique dominant ideas and undercut dogma; and make room for pleasure (pp. 299–300). This list nicely summarizes the ways in which social movement cultures contribute to the process of organization and mobilization, and—in so doing—serve both to expose the injustices motivating the movement and elevate alternative cultural and political understandings.

Reed's analysis explicitly entwines culture with social, economic, and political forces (p. 314). His examples also speak to the importance of environmental and technological forces. We know, for example, that geographic proximity remains one of the strongest correlates of participation in protests, and Reed's own examples underscore the importance of the Internet for creating a "virtual" organizational network within the global justice movement.

One of the most intriguing chapters in the book considers the drama of the black power movement. Reed discusses the efforts of members of the "black power theater" movement to fundamentally alter consciousness among black Americans (Chapter 2). Playwright Amiri Baraka described his work as a revolutionary "theater of assault" on dominant consciousness. Reed connects the theater of black power with the evocative actions of the Black Panthers, including their 1967 armed siege of the California legislature (p. 40). Reed argues compellingly that the Sacramento action not only was the party's most famous political-theatrical work, but that it was a logical extension of the theatrical practice at the center of black power (p. 53).

One—perhaps inevitable—danger of explicating the meaning of movement art is that doing so privileges one strand of mobilization over others. As Aldon Morris (*The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*, 1986) argues, there were many origins of the civil rights movement, and the repertoire and cultures of the movement reflected that rich inheritance. No doubt the newspaper photographs of Linda Brown crossing the train tracks to attend her segregated school or of six-year-old Ruby Bridges single-handedly integrating New Orleans public schools contributed to the national framing of the movement and its achievements, but so too did the tactical maneuvering that undergirded the NAACP strategy to pursue integration, first, in graduate schools, and then in undergraduate admissions, and only then in public schools.

Dana Fisher's *Activism Inc.* provides a useful counterpoint to a discussion of the importance of culture and the process of crafting authentic meanings within effective social movement mobilization. Fisher describes the workings of a grassroots canvassing organization called the People's Project and similar organizations that have contracted to undertake the grassroots canvassing efforts of a range of progressive movements including Greenpeace, the Sierra Club, Save the Children, the Human Right

Campaign, and the Democratic Party. Over the course of two years, Fisher visited six offices of the People's Project and interviewed 115 canvassers. She conducted follow-up telephone interviews with two-thirds of her sample the following summer. Her research shows that the outsourcing of grassroots politics may actually serve to deaden the impulse to participate in collective action.

It comes as no surprise to learn that political canvassers are overworked and underpaid. However, the extent to which their work is programmed and disconnected from local communities is surprising. Canvassers are retained based on their ability to meet fundraising quotas; they are discouraged from questioning the nature of their enterprise or the links between what they are doing and the goals that had led them to involvement in the first place. Fisher tells of legions of young people worked to the point of burnout raising money for campaigns they only vaguely understand, under contract to distant organizations that they have no chance to influence or join.

These organizations import the techniques of door-to-door sales and steadfastly stand by those methods except in the nature of the product they sell (e.g., contributing to a good cause rather than buying a vacuum cleaner). Canvassers are required to follow a script: "people say *exactly* what's there and memorize it . . ." (p. 24). This is a far cry from the interpretive repertoire unfolding within the social movements discussed in the Reed book. Rather than participating in the project of crafting a collective agenda, political action within the People's Project is handed down from national and state-level offices (p. 29). Fisher finds a potential exception to this tendency toward routinization in the daily announcements process, which can involve "chanting, singing and dancing" (p. 22). It is a process that works unevenly across the offices she studied, but it turns out—as with all other facets of the organization she studied—even the morning announcement process is completely scripted (p. 23).

Canvassers are expected to be able and willing to move around the country as needed. This transience, combined with long hours and low pay, effectively severs any connection with the local communities into which organizers are dropped. The effect, Fisher argues, is that we are turning droves of idealistic young people away from grassroots politics. Additionally, we are limiting the entry points into progressive politics from the grassroots level, particularly as more and more national groups are outsourcing their canvassing efforts to groups like the People's Project (p. 85). For the small minority of canvassers not turned off by the process, we are severing the local connection between organizers and communities that would make the term *grass roots* have any real meaning. Even though canvassing can contribute substantial amounts of money to a political campaign, it is a far cry from the notion of meaningful participation.

Fisher's work also offers a—too brief—sketch of a different form of organization and mobilization that she attributes to the political Right. This alternative model, she argues, is able to "harness social capital" and offer true venues for "meaningful participation" (p. 107). It would be interesting to see how this form of organizing has been developed, and why it has failed to make inroads in the Left, with its rich history of populism. Additionally, it would be fascinating if Fisher were able to follow her canvassers over a longer period of time to see what effect their—often first and largely negative—introduction to direct democracy through the People's Project has had on their continuing social and political involvement.

The Supreme Court and American Political

Development. Edited by Ronald Kahn and Ken I. Kersch. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2006. 400p. \$45.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper. DOI: 10.1017/S1537592707070375

— Jeffery A. Jenkins, *Northwestern University*

In this book, Ronald Kahn and Ken I. Kersch bring together an impressive group of scholars to present essays on how the theoretical tenets of the American political development (or APD) research agenda can help illuminate the behavior and institutional trajectory of the U.S. Supreme Court over time. At the same time, these authors discuss at length the role that the Supreme Court plays in the continuing development of the APD enterprise and the ways in which the American state has evolved. This volume provides a useful contribution, as the APD literature has typically focused on the presidency and bureaucracy (specifically, executive agencies), and more recently on Congress, as the key players in the development of the American state, with "parties and courts" representing the historical antecedents. By focusing specifically on the Supreme Court, Kahn and Kersch place it in a starring role in American legal development, and American political development more generally.

Kahn and Kersch provide a useful background essay on the scholarly Courts literature over the last half century, which helps to place the APD research agenda in historical context. As they discuss, the APD literature is a product of the historical institutionalism movement, which first emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (principally in the comparative literature), applied to the American case. This movement occurred in response to the perceived narrowness of behavioralism, which had come to dominate the Courts field at the time. APD scholars argued that a broader and more nuanced view of the Supreme Court was necessary in order to understand how the Court's decision-making context had evolved over time. This more macro view, which encompasses the path dependence, timing, and sequence of political decisions in a temporally fluid political environment with multiple actors, was a stark contrast to the purely preference-based tenets of the behavioral (or