

## Reviews

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Marcia Chatelain. *Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corp., 2020. 336 pp. ISBN 978-1-63149-394-2 \$28.95 (cloth).

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Carl Stokes loved his hometown of Cleveland. Born and raised in this Midwest city, he won the 1967 mayoral election, becoming the first African American mayor of a major municipality. For many Black voters, their support for Stokes also supported visions of Black capitalism and “their desires to see themselves reflected in positions of power and authority” in Cleveland (91). Stokes realized that he needed to “assume a probusiness stance” to survive his mayoral term, while he supported the Black electorate that looked towards a brighter future (91). Thus, the new mayor supported Black businesspeople such as Ernest Hilliard, who desired one of the lucrative McDonald’s franchises in East Cleveland’s Black community. These four restaurants owned by three white businessmen, “exceeded the national average of profits each year” (94). Many community activists wondered if any of the profits remained in the neighborhood, decided to boycott the four restaurants to compel McDonald’s into extending franchise opportunities to African American investors. Under immense pressure, the three East Side locations closed from a lack of sales and forced the last franchisee to sell to Hilliard, who shortly enjoyed profits exceeding more than 84% over the previous year (94). Unlike some sit-ins and boycotts at which activists fought racial segregation in restaurants and lunch counters, the Cleveland boycotts aimed for ownership, investment, and economic prosperity for a meaningful amount of African Americans in the city (120).

In the 2020 Pulitzer Prize–winning book *Franchise: The Golden Arches in Black America*, Marcia Chatelain examines the role of McDonald’s, one of the world’s most successful fast-food brands, and the “hidden history of the intertwined relationship between the struggle for civil rights and the expansion of the fast-food system” (3). Starting with founders Maurice and Richard McDonald in the 1940s and then moving into the twenty-first century, Chatelain highlights the “contemporary conversation about race and fast food” and how “other fast-food chains followed McDonald’s path as they identified and cultivated a Black consumer market and franchise corps” (11). As McDonald’s began to franchise locations across the country, and embedded itself into American history, the scholarship on this restaurant ignored the “Golden Arches” connection and their relationship to Black America. In a clear intervention, Chatelain argues that when denied access and citizenship to what Lizabeth Cohen calls the “consumer republic,” African Americans used “the marketplace to make claims for their rights” (12). Therefore, McDonald’s had no other choice but to acknowledge the significance of their Black customers and franchisees, after decades of social, political, economic, and cultural actions to hold the corporation accountable. Chatelain’s interventions, the critical analysis on Black

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America as leading consumers and influencers of the McDonald's brand, as well as proving that capitalism under any guise can unify and "disassemble communities" that it claimed to serve, gives readers an unparalleled history of fast food, civil rights, capitalism, and identity in the twentieth-century United States.

Chatelain utilizes a broad and diverse range of sources over seven chapters, including newspaper, radio, and television advertisements, music, interviews, peer-reviewed studies from the National Institute of Health, court decisions, and African American periodicals such as the *Chicago Defender*, *Ebony Magazine*, and *Black Enterprise*. Most impressive is Chatelain's usage of Felix A. Burrows, Jr.'s ViewPoint Collection at the Chicago Public Library, which included documents from his market research and consulting firm, and from advertising agencies such as Burrell Communications. She argues that ViewPoint's and Burrell's research of Black McDonald's customers during the 1970s found that even after "the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the memory of the way things used to be, as well as the knowledge of the things that still remained after the Act," brought trepidation to the Black dining experience (176). Accordingly, the advertising created by Burrell Communications, using Black actors that conversed in African American Vernacular English, helped reassure black consumers that McDonald's could be a safe and welcoming place as well as an accessible dining experience.

At over three hundred pages, Chatelain examines the federal capitalism programs that expanded the growth of new restaurants in urban centers, the story of Carl Stokes and the Cleveland Boycott, which pushed for Black ownership and investment in the community, and how McDonald's locations became sites of resistance for activists like the Black Panthers in Portland, Oregon during the 1970s. She also highlights the efforts of Jesse Jackson's "Operation PUSH" and the local chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in Southern California, which supported Black businesspeople in their lawsuits against the McDonalds Corporation during the 1980s. Finally, in the last chapter, Chatelain looks at racial discrimination, economic and health disparities, food deserts, and the rebuilding of Los Angeles after the 1992 Uprising through the deployment of fast food, and the failure of capitalism to solve these growing social, economic, and political issues through a Big Mac sandwich.

With the new preface for the paperback edition and its conclusion, which references the Ferguson, Missouri protests for Michael Brown's murder and against police violence during the Summer of 2014, Chatelain makes a note of the McDonald's franchise at 9131 West Florissant Avenue at the center of the protests and the surrounding community. She notes that "this book is concerned with the reasons that places like Ferguson are more likely to get a fast-food restaurant rather than direct cash aid to the poor, oversight over the police department, or jobs that pay more than \$8.60 per hour after an uprising" (260). By the last pages, *Franchise* reiterates that the pursuit of Black capitalism and increasing Black ownership of McDonald's franchises does not mean that it helps the entirety of the Black community, nor do the profits trickle down to employees still fighting for a living wage. By using the Ferguson Uprising and the McDonald's on West Florissant Avenue as the bookends of the study, Chatelain shows the enduring and complicated role of the restaurant as a site of protest, breaking bread, capitalism, and community space for African Americans.

One of *Franchise's* greatest strengths is how Chatelain builds her arguments using political, social, economic, and cultural analysis to center the African American contributions to the

world's famous restaurant brand. Likewise, Chatelain's arguments about how McDonald's "fast food" became "Black food" over the decades, also showed that this transition was a sign of societal and governmental neglect of the people. Alternatively, the in-depth conversation about fast-food and health outcomes seemed reserved for the end of the book, when Chatelain uses the 2007 Naomi Klein work, *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, as a beginning point for interrogations into food justice (261). A digital project could further examine these thoughts, along with adding the commercials and advertisements that Chatelain uses as evidence in this study. With more gendered analysis of the vital role Black women played through Black capitalism, food, and franchising, Chatelain could engage with scholars in the field of Black Food Studies such as Psyche William-Forsen, Ashanti Reese, and Monica White. Ultimately, *Franchise* highlights the understudied contributions and connections between fast-food, race, and the capitalism behind franchising McDonald's restaurants by African Americans, and that these efforts can only be half the battle when finding a "seat at the table."

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doi:10.1017/eso.2022.24

Published online July 04, 2022

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Ghassan Moazzin. *Foreign Banks and Global Finance in Modern China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 352 pp. ISBN: 978-1-31651-703-1, \$99.99 (cloth).

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English-language histories of Sino-German commercial relations are few and far between, especially for the pre-1914 period. *Foreign Banks and Global Finance in Modern China* addresses this gap and more. It retraces the history of the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank (DAB) around this time, and stages a broader intervention on how to interpret foreign banks' impact in late Qing and Republican-era China.

The book's intervention lies its challenge to earlier narratives of foreign banks in China, which framed "banks as part of the imperialist domination of China or tacitly accept[ed] or d[id] not properly challenge this view" (7). In their place, the book emphasizes the intermediary, infrastructural, and interdependent features of foreign banks' activities. As profit-making conduits of capital, knowledge, and practices, these banks possessed interests distinct from their home governments, and relied on "relative equality of power among the different foreign powers" (263) to operate in Chinese markets.

That Chinese markets mattered is evident in Chapter 1, where the Deutsche Bank's failure to sustain its Chinese operations in the 1870s did not deter new branch proposals a decade later. While the Bismarck government nudged German financial interests to work together by jointly financing DAB, the official hope that it would facilitate "independent access for both German