

Case Cited

Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood 126 S. Ct. 961 (2006).

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Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race. By Laura E. Gomez. New York: NYU Press, 2007. Pp. 256. \$41.00 cloth; \$21.00 paper.

Reviewed by Sherene H. Razack, University of Toronto

Races are made, not born, and the making of Mexican Americans as a race, tracked so carefully by Gomez in *Manifest Destinies*, was highly instructive for me as someone engaged in thinking about the making of Muslim as a race in the post-9/11 period. Beginning with an important distinction, that racial group membership is mainly assigned by the dominant group, (although it often comes to be taken up by the racialized group itself), whereas ethnic group membership is chosen by members of the ethnic group themselves, Gomez shows readers how the involuntary nature of racial group membership is intimately bound up with conquest and accumulation. As Hannah Arendt remarked, race thinking, the division of humanity into the deserving and the undeserving according to descent, matured into a full-fledged ideology with imperialism when, attached to a project of accumulation, it became an organizing principle (Arendt 1973:159). What one sees in *Manifest Destinies* is how race works as an organizing principle in American history. The American racial project, commonly understood as a black/white paradigm, is in fact a complex and fluid system in which every group's status—from recently arrived immigrants to white “ethnic” groups—is overdetermined by race. This insight, more than any other, is why this book must be read.

One of *Manifest Destinies*'s greatest strengths is its exploration not only of the racial strategies of American colonizers (who built their own house of race on the foundations left by the Spanish) but also, more interesting by far, the responses of the first Mexican Americans as they navigated the colonial racial order. *Manifest Destinies* has a lot to teach about the colonial project as a multiracial project in which the color line was more fluid than one might have imagined. American colonizers courted the first Mexicans they conquered, offering Mexican men the vote, when there was no other way to manage them. Those who later argued that New Mexico should become a state emphasized that Mexicans had vestiges of Spanish culture and were therefore possibly redeemable. In this racial game, the colonizers could flirt with the legal con-

struction of Mexicans as white even as they reminded them socially that they were not. For Mexicans, the legal privileges attached to whiteness made whiteness an attractive game to play. Gomez reminds readers that the one-drop rule, where one drop of African ancestry conferred black status, had its mirror image: one drop of European ancestry (Spanish) conferred some white status on Mexicans. In ensuring that Mexicans would have to sell out blacks and Native Americans to gain status, and paradoxically confirming that Mexicans would forever be insecurely white, the racial dynamics of the American colonial project in Mexico laid the groundwork for whiteness as an aspiration *for all subsequent groups*. From Jews to the Irish, members of each group would ultimately come to recognize that their status depended on achieving the greatest distance from blackness. One cannot understand this feature of race in America without journeying through the history of the American conquest of Mexico.

If the history that Gomez traces describes how color lines get drawn in the sand, it has less to say about those moments when it might have been otherwise. Mexicans held land collectively and, as communities spatially segregated from whites, could refuse for a while to enter into games of whiteness and could maintain their alliances with Native Americans. When the land was seized, and decades of legal contestation of the seizure led nowhere, Mexicans lost what might have remained a space of anticolonial resistance. Could it have been otherwise? Were other allegiances and alliances so effectively pre-empted by the brute force of law? I wonder too about the fact that the only group not invited to move up and down the white scale were blacks. What in the legal and social history ensured this outcome? *Manifest Destinies* cannot of course answer this question, since it is not an examination of the making of black as a race. What it does do, and brilliantly, is to remind readers to move beyond the rigidity of the black/white paradigm and more closely examine the making of white people as a category.

Law's role in colonialism is intense but messy and uneven. In this book, white supremacy appears as a chess board in which all groups move, each playing the race game under specific material constraints. Races, of course, can be unmade and in historical accounts such as this one, one can perhaps find the political will as groups and as individuals, to refuse whiteness and at the very least to recognize when it is the game being played. Thinking of my own concerns about the making of Muslim as a race, after reading *Manifest Destinies*, I could now ask: How is the making of Muslim as a race connected to a project of accumulation? How do Muslim elites play the game of whiteness? Does blackness (the imperative to be distant from it in order to gain rights) anchor the making of

Muslim as a race? And what of President Barack Obama, who is obliged to say as often as possible that he is not a Muslim and that he loves Israel?

Reference

Arendt, Hannah (1973) *On the Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.

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Exporting American Dreams: Thurgood Marshall's African Journey.
By Mary L. Dudziak. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
Pp. 257. \$24.95 cloth.

Reviewed by Thomas Hilbink, Open Society Institute

When it was released in 2000, Dudziak's *Cold War Civil Rights* made a major contribution to the understanding of civil rights, the rights revolution, and the place of rights in political and legal orders. While civil rights historians were long cognizant of the ways in which the civil rights movement played out on the Cold War stage, Dudziak's focused lens brought a deeper understanding of how geopolitical concerns in the second half of the twentieth century influenced America's rights revolution. With her latest work, *Exporting American Dreams: Thurgood Marshall's African Journey*, Dudziak would seem to be taking a closer look at an interesting moment in that larger "cold war civil rights" history: Thurgood Marshall's involvement in negotiations over Kenyan independence. While the book does tackle that subject, it even more interestingly uses Marshall's "journey" as a means of exploring the complex and intertwined relationship between law, violence, and social change.

As the fight for Kenyan independence escalated in the late 1950s, the British government called for talks with the nationalist factions about a "constitutional" transition of power. Nationalists invited Marshall, by then internationally known for leading the legal campaign against racial segregation in the United States, to advise them in these negotiations. As the first lunch counter sit-ins began in North Carolina in February 1960, Marshall sat in London arguing for inclusion of a bill of rights in the proposed Kenyan constitution. Marshall's draft, much of which did not make it into the Kenyan Independence Constitution, revealed the American lawyer's deep respect for the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, including the Reconstruction Amendments. It also showed the extent to which he was influenced by the Universal Declaration of