


BOOK REVIEWS

## Neighborhood Watch: Policing White Spaces in America

By Shawn E. Fields. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 193 pp., \$29.99 Paper.

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The stark conclusion of the Kerner Commission in 1968 was that America had “two societies: one white, one black.” Of course, this should have come as no surprise – and likely did not to the Black Americans forced to live with the marginalization that came along with the “separate and unequal” societies that the American government had created and worked consistently to maintain. Nevertheless, it is a reality that we have yet to vanquish. In *Neighborhood Watch: Policing White Spaces in America*, Shawn E. Fields digs into both the institutional and interpersonal ways in which this color line is enforced in the United States. Specifically, he examines how everyday White Americans enforce racial segregation through the policing of common spaces, “White spaces,” in America.

Fields argues that the pernicious and widespread anti-Black fear that many (all?) White Americans hold motivates them to try to control the presence of Black people in their communities. This control manifests in the form of 911 calls, taking video footage, and, in the most extreme cases, vigilante violence and murder. Fields contends that these tactics are used by White Americans to maintain the informal apartheid that exists in U.S. society.

The book itself masterfully weaves together the way that the color line has been enforced throughout historical eras to make it clear that the myriad forms of racial violence and control are manifestations of the same motivation: maintenance of the color line. Fields chronicles the U.S. history of White social control from slavery and lynchings through the War on Drugs and Stand Your Ground vigilantism. This incredibly succinct overview of racism in U.S. history (in Chapter 1) gives his central thesis important historical contextualization—something that is sorely needed but often overlooked in contemporary analyses of politics.

The next several chapters dig into four contemporary manifestations of tactics used by White people and the government to terrorize and harass Black people: 911 calls (Chapter 2), Terry stops (Chapter 3), Stand Your Ground laws (Chapter 4), and qualified immunity for police officers (Chapter 5). The addition of analyses of 911 calls is a

particularly important contribution of this book because such calls are often not the subject of analyses, despite their importance in implicating everyday White Americans (i.e., non-police officers) in policing segregated spaces.

The key argument that Fields makes is that Whites' "racial fear" motivates the enforcement of segregation in American society. When White people see Black people outside the racial tropes that they ascribe to them, they become suspicious and seek to enforce social expectations that relegate Black people back to the "iconic ghetto." Fields largely focuses on the way that implicit racial bias drives this racial fear, which at times seemed to leave little room for analyses of the role that conscious racial bias can also play.

Nevertheless, Fields' focus on implicit racial bias is used to motivate important policy recommendations that he makes in Chapters 7 and 8. He argues that we do not have the time to wait for implicit bias training to reshape White Americans' minds (if this is even ever possible) and, as a result, we have to focus on *immediate* solutions to protect Black people. His central thesis here is that reform "should focus less on improving the *quality* of interactions between police and the communities they serve and more on decreasing the *quantity* of such interactions" (p. 7, *emphases added*). I appreciated the urgency with which these recommendations were made—it ensured that the book would not only engage in theoretical debates but also focus on the real lives that are impacted by the actions taken by White people motivated by racial fear, the police, and the government.

Fields proposes several policy and legal recommendations that would make for great conversations in both undergraduate and graduate courses. Further, as this book focuses more on historical and legal analyses, rather than quantitative analyses, it would be accessible to students of all levels. Fields discusses solutions like deterring 911 abuse in the first place, as well as punishing it once it occurs, in addition to ending qualified immunity for police officers, a return to the English common law model of self-defense that includes a "duty to retreat," a redefinition of what we consider "reasonable" when using deadly force, and independent investigations of police incidents. Throughout his discussion, he is attentive to normative goals of such legislation as well as the practicality of getting such work done.

Some of the reforms he proposes align with calls from activists who want to "defund the police." Fields addresses these similarities and proposes a reframing of such motivations—away from *defunding* and toward curbing what he dubs "maximum policing." Right now, we have policies that encourage the maximum level of reporting suspected crimes, the maximum level of militarized response to any 911 calls, and a "shoot first, think later" culture that encourages maximum engagement between the police and public. This culture of maximum policing, Fields argues, is what needs to be eliminated in America.

On the whole, *Neighborhood Watch* provides an accessible and normatively important critique of not only the criminal justice system and the ways in which the government constructs and maintains segregation and marginalization in American society but also the ways in which everyday White Americans participate in such maintenance. This is a novel contribution that adds depth to the burgeoning

policing literature in political science, as well as to our understandings of legal theory, the policymaking process, and studies of race and racism across disciplines like law, political science, sociology, and history.

doi:[10.1017/rep.2023.4](https://doi.org/10.1017/rep.2023.4)

## *Citizenship in Hard Times: How Ordinary People Respond to Democratic Threat*

By Sara Wallace Goodman. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. 250p. \$29.99 paper.

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In recent years, a cottage industry has emerged as scholars have fixated on the seeming erosion of democratic norms and institutions in advanced and developing democracies around the globe. Sara Wallace Goodman's new book, *Citizenship in Hard Times*, is a welcomed addition to this growing corpus of scholarship. Goodman explores the attitudinal antecedents of democratic erosion by examining how citizens think about democratic citizenship norms during crises, namely during periods of intense partisan polarization and in instances of foreign election interference.

Goodman's focus on citizenship norms is rooted in her desire to make ordinary people central actors in determining the stability of democratic institutions during crises. For Goodman, shared citizenship norms are central to fostering a shared political community and for bestowing legitimacy to any political regime. However, by centering citizenship norms in her theory of democratic stability, democratic crises are most acute when people respond to democratic threats not as citizens with shared national goals, but as partisans who place the pursuit of political power above the preservation of democracy. When this occurs, average people no longer serve as a well-spring of political stability; rather, they are a source of instability.

Goodman offers an additional wrinkle, however, by arguing that partisan behavior among citizens is conditional on certain positional incentives, namely whether

1) citizens are members of the incumbent or challenging party and 2) political parties operate within majoritarian or consensus-style electoral systems. On the one hand, Goodman claims incumbents will choose to maintain the political status quo—even if it means ignoring democratic threats—while challengers have a comparatively larger incentive to upend it, especially when democratic threats are