

2009

Review of Globalization and America: Race, Human Rights and Inequality & When Welfare Disappears: The Case for Economic Human Rights

Ramsaran

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/swb>



Part of the [Human Rights Law Commons](#), and the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ramsaran. 2010. "Review of Globalization and America: Race, Human Rights and Inequality & When Welfare Disappears: The Case for Economic Human Rights." *Societies Without Borders* 4 (2): 266-268.

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.case.edu/swb/vol4/iss2/13>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Cross Disciplinary Publications at Case Western Reserve University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Societies Without Borders by an authorized administrator of Case Western Reserve University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

Examining American Inequalities

Globalization and America: Race, Human Rights and Inequality. Angela J. Hattery, David G. Embrick, and Earl Smith, editors. (Landham, MD: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2008. 304 pp. hardcover, \$75.00; softcover, \$29.95).

When Welfare Disappears; The Case for Economic Human Rights. Kenneth J. Neubeck. (New York: Routledge, 2006. 224 pp. hardcover, \$135.00; softcover, \$39.95).

In *Globalization and America*, Hattery, Embrick, and Smith attempt to develop a link between human rights and social inequalities that occur within America and issues of globalization. It shows that inequalities and human rights violations are connected to an ideological framework developed and practiced by the United States, which can be exported to other regions of the world. The book is divided into four sections: race and racism in the United States; reparations; immigration, and links between local and global human rights issues. Through analysis of these issues, *Globalizing America* challenges the theoretical assumption that with the spread of capitalism through globalization, democratization will lead to fewer human rights violations.

The book begins by challenging the basic assumptions of the human rights tradition, which is rooted in individualism and a value-free state. The authors demonstrate that the human rights tradition fails to take into consideration a number of issues, such as group-based claims, power differences between individuals, and the racialized nature of state formation that prioritizes the West's interests over the rest. This section also shows how organizations that attempt to promote individual rights in the form of diversity use diversity ideology to divest, rather than invest, in change.

The centrality of violence, both physical and psychological in the perpetuation of Jim Crow and discrimination is central to the discussion of reparations. The underlying intent of this section is not to demonstrate whether the cost of reparations is possible, but to show the reasons why any discussions on the issue are minimized and dismissed. An argument is also made for reparations not to punish whites, but for acknowledgement and awareness. This section highlights the common white narratives on repatriations in both the United States and South Africa, despite their obvious differences.

The section on immigration issues focuses mainly on Mexican immigrants in the United States, as well as on Mexicans living in the border areas, highlighting the process of stigmatization that is used in immigration law enforcement. This section shows how sexual violence can be used as a tool to dominate through eroticized power. It also explores how similar variables that are at work on the Mexican American boarder can also operate in the West Bank and Gaza. The final section seeks to look at how ordinary people can engage the process of globalization in an attempt to change it, demonstrating how grassroots movements can engage and challenge issues of inequality, and how newer constitutions incorporate issues of human rights within their mandate.

Looking at inequality within the context of economic human rights, Neubeck's *When Welfare Disappears* asks if poverty has an individual or a systemic cause. To answer this question, the book looks at how welfare policy affects lone mothers and children, finding that US welfare policy reform reinforces the race, class, and gender inequalities. Poverty persists in the US, Neubeck argues, due to the policy decisions of the ruling elite.

The book's empirical focus is how the "Welfare to Work Program," instituted in the 1990s, has impacted lone mothers and their children. The findings show that while welfare rolls have declined, the number of lone mother households in poverty has not declined. Because the ideological intent of the state has been to promote the virtues of marriage, it diverts funds away from lone mother headed families.

Neubeck gets behind the numbers to show the impact of welfare reform on various subgroups, something that tends to be ignored in many policy discussions. His research identifies the impact of welfare reform on the GLBT population, lone mothers with disabilities, and rural lone mothers. The special plight of lone women households of women of color, immigrants, and Native Americans are also addressed. Additionally, the book examines the increase in homelessness among lone women households and the increase in child welfare only recipients.

A meaningful contribution of this text is the author's attempts to show how other affluent nations have dealt with poverty alleviation. Neubeck gives a strong critique of the construction of the poverty line in the US, which is seen as a tool developed by the elites using political and not a result of scientific logic. He argues that states that have been successful in addressing poverty have developed reliable income transfer policies that assist families whether they are mother headed or not. States that see

poverty as an economic human rights issue are more likely to use income transfer policies. They have greater success in addressing poverty, compared to cases such as the US, which sees poverty as an individual's troubles. According to Neubeck, this attitude is cultivated by the elites, and thus, only US elites need to be held accountable. *When Welfare Disappears* would become more complete if it included some discussion about the American ideological system that promotes individualism and a minimalist state.

The strengths of *Globalizing America* complement the strengths and weaknesses of *When Welfare Disappears*, with the first offering a look at the ideological system with limited analysis of the class structure and the second offering a look at class implications of inequality in need of analysis of the ideological system. Overall, both texts make a valuable contribution to the ongoing conversation about social inequality, one considering the impact of globalization on America and the other examining a vulnerable sections of the community, lone mothers and their children.

Dave Ramsaran
Department of Sociology/Anthropology
Susquehanna University

Copyright of Societies Without Borders is the property of Brill Academic Publishers and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.