

“the bulimic character of knowledge-producing agencies threatens to drown political subjects in an ocean of information” (p. 310). But these are the exceptions, mostly corralled in the introduction and concluding chapter. In the main, this is utterly accessible stuff with episodes of narrative excellence, especially when Curtis turns his hand to biographical detail. And, frankly, the whole is lifted from the outset by brilliant Acknowledgements.

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Constance Backhouse. *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999. Pp. 485.

This study makes a valuable contribution to our understanding of how people have come to be positioned within hierarchal and seemingly natural categories of “race.” It is a must-read for any scholar and community-based organizer interested in how racist inequalities have been, and continue to be, socially organized in Canada. Moreover, Backhouse’s documentation of the efforts of diverse people to challenge racist beliefs, practices, and institutions is of enormous significance to our understanding of the historical formation of anti-colonial and anti-racist social movements.

Backhouse frames her examination of Canadian legal history within a socially situated understanding of “race.” Rather than postulate that racism is simply the result of problematic “race relations,” thereby naturalizing the structuring of inequalities, as many scholars of racism do, Backhouse utilizes Robert Miles’ concept of racialization to make sense of the long and at times contradictory history of ideas of “race” in Canada. She successfully shows the social character of the process by which discrete categories of humans have been representationally

constructed in ranked hierarchies of “race” through the law. For the most part, Backhouse is able to avoid the reification of racism as the result of something called “race” and, instead, demonstrates how racism has worked to legitimate the exploitation of one group by another. The significance of representations of discrete “races” to both the processes of identity-formation and socioeconomic inequalities in Canada are well conveyed.

In recognizing the socially constructed character of ideas of “race” and “ethnicity” (although the latter is less explored) Backhouse does not make the mistake of then trivializing the importance of racism to the making of Canadian society. By calling our attention to the ways in which “race” was actively constructed through Canadian legal systems, she is able to expose starkly the material force that the ideology of racism has had in Canada. The “colour-coded” construction of “red,” “black,” “yellow,” and “white” “racial” identities was consequential—indeed integral—to the construction of the “imagined community” of the Canadian nation and its capitalist state. Backhouse explores how racism constructed binary codes of negative duality that fractured human society along ideas of “race.” Racism, therefore, shaped the array of meanings attached to being either “Canadian” or part of its “foreign”-Others. That it did so within the context of an expanding British imperial empire is well understood by Backhouse. Indeed, she shows us that ideas of “civilization,” with their mirror image of “savagery,” hinged in large part on the normalization of the capitalist mode of production.

Backhouse demonstrates that with an ideological form of consciousness firmly in place, where emphasis is placed on abstract categories of “race” rather than on social relations of power, racist practices normalized the organization of communities through the practices of apartheid and exploitation. She shows that they did so, in part, through the central importance of “white-ness” to the exercise of power. The formation and perpetuation of a “white” identity came to be seen within the legal system as the colour-less, “race”-less pivot around which a normative Canadian identity revolved. In an

attempt to portray Canadian white nationalism as non-racist, many a racist claimed that privileging whiteness had less to do with practices of domination and subordination and more to do with one's duty to "protect one's own."

Such a "stupefying ignorance," as Dionne Brand names it, worked, of course, to protect those who benefited from racism. Racist legal practices helped to construct the "white nation" that the Canadian state was said to rule for. Massive differentials in wage levels, working, housing and living conditions, life expectancy and the possession of good health, educational and business opportunities, mobility rights, religious rights (and the right not to be religious), access to immigration and then to citizenship status, rights to self-identity and self-determination, and so on—all these and many more were seen to be "the way things are" instead of being the actively organized consequences of racist practices.

While the mutually sustaining ideologies of racism and "racelessness" served to naturalize notions of entitlement held by whites (thereby strengthening their commitment to the Canadian nation state), it rendered invisible the racialized "Others" in the "imagined community" of Canada. This did not mean, however, that those who had been racialized as Other were ignored within the Canadian legal system, quite the contrary. Backhouse deftly (but gently for those of us not well-versed in legal theory) takes us on a guided tour of Canadian legal processes as they existed in the first half of the last century. With her thoughtful study of selected legal cases, we learn that a racialized form of consciousness thoroughly shaped the making (and, at times, contesting) of legislation. We see that racism was much more than simply the work of aberrant individuals with singular idiosyncrasies but that racism was (and remains) a systemic, everyday and usually unchallenged fact of life in both the corridors of power and in the streets and homes of Canada.

Whether in Backhouse's page-turning description of how Indigenous peoples living in the northern parts of North America were named "Eskimos" and then reclassified as "Indians" by colonists and their supremely arrogant racialized worldviews and institutions; in the examination of how ideas of "race" were

central to the large-scale destruction of Aboriginal self-determinative practices and theft of their land; in a discussion of how many white men and women chose to further manipulate their racialized privilege by securing the subordination of those they renamed “red,” “yellow,” and “black” “races”; or by showing us that throughout the history of Canada, many negatively racialized individuals and groups came forward to challenge hegemonic practices of racism, Backhouse illustrates that the Canadian legal system served as a site of struggle between groups intent on maintaining their privileged place and those attempting to resist racist practices. Ideas of “race” were formed through these struggles. Backhouse clearly demonstrates a highly sophisticated and grounded understanding of the state within white, capitalist patriarchies.

Significantly, Backhouse demonstrates that the disguising of the racist intent and effect of legislation is not, as is often thought, a post-1960s phenomenon. Instead, such obfuscation is evident in legislation passed in Saskatchewan in 1919 where explicit reference to racialized designations for employers attempting to hire white women (who were seen as “mothers of the race,” as historian Mariana Valverde has documented) was omitted in an attempt to quash resistance to it from negatively racialized “Asians.” It is also evident in the informal exclusion of Blacks from settling in Canada in the early twentieth century. One of Backhouse’s main contributions to our understanding of racism in Canada, then, is her insistence that the existence of supposedly “race neutral” language, because it was formulated within the social context of a highly racialized, and racist, environment, continued to have highly racist effects.

In this well-researched book (there are over 150 pages of footnotes), Backhouse further documents how the ideology of racism was constructed at the intersection of related social processes of gender and class. She builds upon the work of anti-racist feminists, such as Roxana Ng, Patricia Monture-Angus, and Himani Bannerji, and pays careful attention to the gendered racialization of class. The interwoven and at times seamless links between what sociologist Dorothy Smith calls “conceptual practices of power” and material relations of class, “race,” and

gender are front and centre throughout Backhouse's examination of Canadian legal history.

In particular, she is able to show how the hetero-patriarchal repression of sexuality and promulgation of unequal gender relations intermixed in an explosive manner with ideas and practices of racialized hierarchies. The potent combination of racism and sexism organized violent attacks against those who insisted on the legitimacy of their loving practices, of their work and employment practices, and of their community bonds. Much of this violence was carried out in the name of "preventing miscegenation." The pure character of white privilege was seen as threatened by voluntary relationships amongst women and men who had been racialized as "different." Once again, racist patriarchal violence was ideologically reframed as white male chivalry and "protection of one's own."

Such violence was often ignored—or worse, actively organized and condoned—by the legal system. The police, prosecutors, judges, and lawmakers almost wholly failed to act or legislate against racism. Instead, almost without exception, the Canadian legal system organized what Salman Rushdie has called the victory of the One over the Many as evident in a slogan of the Canadian Knights of the Klu Klux Klan: "one flag, one language, one race, one religion, race purity and moral rectitude" (p. 189). Any rare victories won by negatively racialized people of colour were received and presented as "anti-white" practices (again highlighting the backlash to any affirming—and affirmative—action for people of colour as nothing new!) and often quickly overturned by the passing of new, racist legislation.

One of the only problems in an otherwise excellently argued case for the social construction and material effects organized through the idea of "race" is Backhouse's lack of consistent clarity with the concept of racialization. There is a continued and unproblematized use of terms like "racial," and "race." This allows the reader to give causal effect to "race" instead of to the practices of racism. This contrasts starkly with Backhouse's earlier stated commitment to examining the social organization

of racism in Canada and detracts from her otherwise well-grounded argument.

I highly recommend Constance Backhouse's discussion of select legal cases in Canadian history to anyone interested in learning or teaching about how ideologies of racism, sexism, and class have operated materially in Canada. This is one of the best books written in the area of racism and its intersection with relations of gender and class in Canadian society. It would be a very useful addition to courses taught in sociology, women's studies, ethnic studies, political science, Aboriginal studies, and, of course, legal studies.

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Raymond Fonvieille. *Face à la violence; participation et créativité*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1999. 178 p.

Fonvieille propose par cet ouvrage des stratégies pédagogiques pour réintégrer dans le système scolaire les élèves en situations d'échecs multiples, et ce, sans recourir à la violence (manque de respect envers l'étudiant) et sans générer de violence (résistance de l'élève). Ce livre relate donc les expériences de l'auteur, professeur de classe terminale en France pendant plusieurs années.

Le titre porte un peu à confusion car la violence à laquelle il fait allusion est plutôt de nature idéologique que physique. En effet, selon Fonvieille, l'éducation et le système scolaire briment les droits des jeunes; c'est là du moins sa définition de la violence. Il dénonce donc dans cet ouvrage le manque d'engagement de la part des enseignants, surtout de ceux qui trouvent cette cohorte d'élèves difficile et éprouvante. Il dénonce également les établissements qui font preuve d'attitudes conservatrices et autoritaires face aux élèves en difficulté.