

and idealism. Certainly, Atlantic City soured many of the black and white followers of SNCC on liberalism. Yet, to assert, as Watson does that Freedom Summer alone was responsible for the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (280) is to deny the dramatic impact of the 1965 Selma March and all of the work that went on before and after that march, including bringing down additional white student, clergy, and adult allies to rally in Montgomery, Alabama. Indeed, there was another variation of Freedom Summer in 1965, this one sponsored mainly by SCLC, which recruited mostly white college kids who added their own contributions to the struggle for civil rights in Mississippi.

Of course, as demonstrated by historians John Dittmer and Charles Payne, much of the ultimate meaning of Freedom Summer was about how local blacks translated the work generated in 1964 into projects that would change the educational and political lives of Mississippi African-Americans even as later transformations in Mississippi continued to perpetuate racial discrimination. This is not to deny the important work done by the white volunteers in Freedom Summer that Watson so dramatically catalogues. Yet, for Watson, the tidy march of history requires his moving work to end up on a particularly ironic note with the election of Barack Obama in 2008. Attempting to resurrect the idealism of those Freedom Summer volunteers of 1964, Watson minimizes the political contradictions underlying Obama's victory. Quoting one of the Freedom Summer participants about the renewed optimism unleashed by the "historic inauguration of a black president" (300), the book's ending only reinforces the point that drama and symbolism are not the only stuff of real historical transformation. While capturing the drama and symbolism of Freedom Summer with brilliant reportage, Watson too often overlooks the very untidy processes of substantive and radical change.

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**Elizabeth Abel, *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).**

Elizabeth Abel eloquently labels her study of the signage that mandated racial separation during the era of *de jure* southern segregation as a response to the "need for an archive of the ordinary." (xx) In describing the quotidian nature of the written markers of segregation, Lillian Smith, a white southerner and one of Jim Crow's most ardent contemporary critics, famously recalled, "I don't think we noticed the signs. Somehow we seemed always to walk through the right door." Abel gives us the scholarly apparatus for reflecting on these memories of segregation, demonstrating that in the built environment of the pre-1964 South these signs were so common as to be rendered almost invisible to some. No doubt black

southerners, who were the objects of the inequality and forced separation embedded in the commands of “whites only” or “colored entrance,” were less likely to be able overlook their sinister imprint on the landscape. Nonetheless, Abel reminds us of how pervasive these signs were and of how quickly they disappeared from the southern backdrop and to a great extent also from our collective cultural memory.

Scholars of the twentieth century South no doubt are familiar with a small handful of well-known images of segregation that faithfully and predictably appear as illustrations in printed discussions of the time period. One of them, which Abel labels “*the* iconic Jim Crow photograph” is the often reproduced 1950 image of side-by-side drinking fountains in North Carolina (119). This photo from the Magnum civil rights collection depicts a large, refrigerated drinking fountain labelled “white” placed directly alongside a smaller and shabbier “colored” fountain, which at the time of the photo was in use by a neatly dressed African-American man. Abel tells us that images such as this one have become well known because, in spite of the ubiquity of Jim Crow signage, documentary photographs depicting them are relatively rare. During the course of her exhaustive research, Abel managed to find less than two hundred of these photographs, which she understandably regards as a “surprising under documentation” given the fact that hundreds of gruesome images of lynchings survived the era (105). Abel makes a number of interesting arguments explaining the relative scarcity of photographs of segregation signage beyond merely their commonplace status. For example, she comments upon the pressure felt by New Deal-era photojournalists to document white subjects and issues that would bolster support for the social welfare policies of the day rather than to critique racism, the propagandistic pressures of the era of the Cold War, and the tendency of some black photographers to highlight black achievements rather than racial barriers in their work.

Abel challenges her readers to view the existing images with a critical eye, to scrutinize them not only for the meanings intended by those who affixed or who created the signs but also by the photographer who immortalized them on film. Her chief contribution in the book (beyond bringing heretofore obscure archival images to the attention of her readers) is her careful meditation on these rare and striking photos as she extracts meaning from their composition, from the contexts of their creation, from the clues to be found in the facial expressions, body postures, clothing choices, and positioning of those individuals captured in the photographic frame, as well as from the wording, construction, and placement of the segregation signs themselves.

Because a study of segregation inevitably must build towards the culmination of its eventual dismantling, Abel acknowledges that “a more inclusive historical frame is...needed to hold these changing scenes together.” (25) The book does indeed lead up to a fine analysis of photographs taken of civil rights protesters sitting at segregated lunch counters in defiance of Jim Crow signage. However,

throughout the text itself, the chronology is more haphazard. Photographs taken decades apart are discussed in brisk succession with what at times seems to be minimal regard for changing historical contexts. The South is also treated as a monolithic whole; potential regional variations are treated as lightly as chronological shifts. Furthermore, the book, which some readers may find dense and jargon laden in places, was clearly written with a handful of narrow specialists in mind. Nonetheless, Abel's accomplishment is formidable, and all students of the American past owe her a tremendous debt for her careful work in creating this paradoxically striking "archive of the ordinary."

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**Shane J. Maddock, *Nuclear Apartheid: The Quest for American Atomic Supremacy from World War II to the Present* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).**

*Nuclear Apartheid* is an intriguing account of the way the United States has sought to preserve its own atomic capability while denying weapons to other nations. In a crisp and thoughtful first chapter that frames the entire account, historian Shane J. Maddock suggests that American policy revolved around the notion that "some states could be trusted with nuclear weapons and some could not." (1) That assumption led to an atomic hierarchy that reflected the global political system. The United States stood at the top, with allies and other major powers coming next, and nations in the post-colonial world at the very bottom. Such a configuration created a framework called "nuclear apartheid" by an Indian diplomat, which provides the title for the book. (1)

Maddock points perceptively to "the mythic conception of America's past" as an important element in creating the pattern of nuclear inequality. "At its heart," he argues, "rested a variant of American exceptionalism that envisioned the United States as outside the normal constraints of a combative world system, therefore exempting Washington from most of the arguments used to dissuade other countries from acquiring nuclear arms." (2) National security concerns and hegemonic goals were likewise elements propelling American policy forward. In addition, a sense of what Maddock calls "technological utopianism" based on American superiority, led to the assumption that other nations could not possibly do what the United States had done on their own. (5) The overarching theme of the book is that "Washington suffered from 'superpower syndrome' – the belief that it could control and dominate the world simply because it had the right to." (9)

The rest of the work amplifies on these ideas in compelling ways. President Franklin D. Roosevelt assumed that an American monopoly was possi-