

ary permeability--a cornerstone of the postethnic order--remains remote, and ethno-racial identities harden as a consequence.

Postethnic America cogently examines multiculturalism against the backdrop of the author's moral unease about the ethnic and racial fault lines running across the United States. It commands the attention of anyone concerned about race, ethnicity and the American future.

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Maria P.P. Root. *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier*. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996.)

Maria Root's collection of readings cognitively and emotionally engage the reader in the psychosocial experience of being multiracial. These readings also foster a critical awareness of the implications of rising numbers of multiracial persons for issues of inter-group race relations and national identity. This awareness forces readers to re-examine the meanings and construction of race beyond the traditional five monoracial categories traditionally used to gather census data.

The book is well organized and begins with a dialog of implications of *de jure* and *de facto* aspects of the American tradition of racial classification by hypodescent, or the "one drop rule." Discussion centers on the government's role in the perpetuation of this blatantly racist ideal, represented by OMB Directive 15, which establishes the race and ethnic standards for federal statistics. Particularly insightful is the insider's look at the debate among and between racial/ethnic minority groups on implications for politics of collective identity of amending this directive by including a multiracial classification. For instance, the addition of a "multiracial" category could play an important part in dismantling racial construction as we know it today and, in the process, respect the identity rights of multiracial individuals who must negotiate minefields of political and social identification. On the other hand, the seeming contradiction of Blacks' insistence of maintaining the one drop rule in their struggle against white domination is well represented.

The essence of the book is the confrontation with the traditional structural and hierarchical issues to be faced as the nation pursues the dialog of race identity and race relations, especially as these are comingled with issues of gender, sexual orientation, social class, and biological versus cultural determinants of identity. Discussion includes non-obvious implications of today's divisive issues, such as critical roles played by multicultural education and diversity in the classroom in mitigating the effects of racism in society, the role of transracial adoptions in exacerbating the stereotype that Black parents are not interested in adoption

and in surmounting racial politics in providing for children, and on the history of affiliation and conflict between Blacks and Jews.

This confrontation with national issues has seemed to overwhelm issues of personal racial/ethnic identity such that multiracials have been forced to develop strategies to negotiate the borders of race. Strategies range from using situational ethnicity and, having linguistic flexibility, to the ability to simultaneously embrace multiple perspectives. These “border crossings” by multiracial individuals defy the traditional monoracial classifications of race and force us to think of ways in which the new dialog may help dismantle negative constructions of race. In the final analysis, the author leads us to a discussion, not only of individual race identity in process, but the more profound implications of national identity. By releasing its firm hold on the rule of hypodescent, the United States is itself in the process of a new identity which may bring the country full circle to the original notion of the ideal of a “melting pot.”

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Vernon J. Williams, Jr. *Rethinking Race: Franz Boas and His Contemporaries.* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996) 152 pp., \$34.95 cloth, \$15.95 paper.

The term “Jim Crow II” is frequently used by African Americans to describe contemporary American race relations, by which they mean that just as legal segregation, lynching and voting restrictions followed emancipation, so has a period of racist reaction followed the successes of the Civil Rights movement. Williams sees parallels between the two periods: “I have attempted to describe and analyze the ideas of persons who provided, in a time comparable to our own, the bases of sophisticated discussion of race and race relations.” Williams is too good a historian to settle for merely demonstrating parallels; he also traces the continuing conflict between American social science which, with some notable exceptions, has been aggressively anti-racist since the 1930s, and America’s deeply ingrained racism.

Franz Boas, born into a German Jewish household, and described by Williams as the “father of modern American anthropology,” is the pivotal figure in *Rethinking Race*. In his work and his relations with colleagues, white and Black, Boas embodied white America’s conflicting ideas about race. Once Boas “had established that white prejudice was the major obstacle to black progress, rather than assumed innate racial traits, it became exceedingly difficult for anthropology and