

Candis Watts Smith & Christina Greer, eds. *Black Politics in Transition: Immigration, Suburbanization and Gentrification*. New York: Routledge, 2019. ix, 279 pp.

Place matters in politics. To the extent that scholars of American politics acknowledge this at all, they rarely focus on the way place shapes Black politics. However, Black populations' movement or dispersal has the potential to greatly change or upend political environments. Candis Watts Smith and Christina Greer, editors of *Black Politics in Transition: Immigration, Suburbanization and Gentrification*, have done a great service by showcasing this important role of place. Contributors help readers understand how the "three important mechanisms of demographic change—immigration, gentrification, and suburbanization—are influencing Black politics across the United States" (Watts Smith p. 3). Like the book, this review is organized into three sections.

This volume's works on immigration standout. Like Greer's *Black Ethnics* (2013), Austin, Gooding, and Carter help us think about Blackness as it interacts with immigration either directly (for those who are immigrants) or indirectly (for those who are in community with immigrants). Austin forwards our understanding of coalition-building among Black groups by describing the political involvement and history of Black American and Caribbean people in New York City. The highlight of Austin's contribution is the thorough and accessible history of Black ethnic political participation. Also notable is her attention to Haitians and Dominican communities, who are less often written about despite their large numbers in New York City.

The idea of double or triple identity is not new but strikes me as refreshing in Gooding's chapter about social interactions and political decision making among first- and second-generation Jamaicans and Trinidadians in Los Angeles and New York. Gooding uncovers a notion of respectability politics in immigrant networks that many Black people know intuitively, but do not discuss in mixed company and certainly do not make the focus of their scholarly work. Like Austin's *The Caribbeanization of Black Politics* (2018), Gooding's chapter is also noteworthy because it expands the scope of inquiry about Black immigrants beyond New York City.

Carter's chapter examines Black Washingtonians' opinions about immigration and what it means for the formerly "chocolate," now "latte" city to describe itself as a sanctuary city. Here, and in her most recent book *American While Black* (2019), Carter challenges the messages we get from some politicians and media suggesting that Black Americans are at odds with immigrant communities. In this instance, she demonstrates that Black Washingtonian's opinions are often more liberal than their white counterparts on the issue of sanctuary cities and other immigration questions.

McGowen and Rogers have different answers to the question of how living in a majority-white neighborhood shapes the political opinions of Black people. McGowen finds that Black Americans' relocation to the suburbs did not lead to differences of opinion with their urban

counterparts. Further, suburban settings increased the likelihood that Black people were among fewer minorities in work and community settings. In some instances, this made them more racially radical. Conversely, Rogers finds that Black respondents' opinions on a number of issues vary based on their residence. Black suburbanites express more positive opinions on a range of issues—like equal treatment in the workplace and interactions with police—than their counterparts in the city.

The field would benefit from more nuance in the discussion of suburbs. As Steward alludes to in her description of the urban South, some suburbs are majority Black *and* marked by economic stability or vitality. What's happening in those places? What, also, about the implicit assumption of the "preferred standing" of suburbs? Little work about suburban politics considers what happens to the Black people who end up in lower income, inner-ring suburbs following their displacement from cities as a result of gentrification.

Mayorga-Gallow begins down the road of adding texture to the conversation about suburbs by offering a rich description of residents' interactions in multiracial suburban communities in Ohio and North Carolina. Feedback from residents in both cities makes clear that Black people face social losses, like isolation and inability to establish friendships with neighbors. Even worse, they may be more likely to fall victim to systems of social control in the very communities that are supposed to improve the quality of their lives. This chapter challenges liberals' assumptions about multiracial environments in a way that is clear, honest, and easy to digest.

The chapters about gentrification and neighborhood change are on the cutting edge of work in this area and ask questions that make way for important developments in the literature. Benjamin questions what we know about political incorporation of Black people and what we can learn when the election of Black candidates may not represent the progress we would assume. Her work will grow in importance as we try to understand other cities with majority-minority populations that may face a similar fate. This may be especially true in rapidly gentrifying places like Washington, D.C., which have long been models for Black political representation and participation.

The literature needs contributions that help us understand whether and how politics in the South has changed in the wake of the Return Migration and the selective Southern migration of older Black populations that has followed rising housing costs in gentrifying communities. Steward's thorough description of the political economy of Black relocation sets the stage for this much-needed analysis by questioning how region influences what we understand about gentrification, who benefits from the phenomenon, and why.

I would have liked to see this volume frame its context by locating itself in the long history of Black migration in America. For example, the role of The Great Migration in Black politics is so substantial, that its placement in this text as its own chapter would have improved the work. Some of this occurs in the introduction, and in texts like *The Great Migration and The Democratic Party: Black Voters and the Realignment of American Politics in the 20th Century*

(Grant, 2020), but there is still much more to be said and to know about how the mechanisms of demographic change in the eras preceding this volume shape where we are today.

The questions in *Black Politics in Transition*, about immigration, suburbanization, and gentrification, are right for this moment in American politics. Overall, the book very well done and a significant contribution to the fields of Black politics and American politics. It is required reading for any person seeking to understand the complexities of contemporary American politics in communities where Black people are present.

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