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**Review of *Unequal Under Law: Race in the War on Drugs*. Doris Marie Provine. Reviewed by Christine Lou.**

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Riley's essential point: people should become participants in social growth and improving health.

The book is an interesting, engaging and refreshing alternative to the traditional economic development model for poor countries. However, some weaknesses remain. For example, Riley asserts that factors such as paternalism and colonization are positive influences in a poor country's ability to make gains in life expectancy. In the light of this historical analysis, one might conclude that the poor countries of the world need another "manifest destiny." One also wonders if poor countries are merely figuring out how to keep their oppressed masses alive longer, not for the good of society, but for the benefit of corrupt governments and imperialistic rulers. In other words, longevity in the midst of oppressive regimes is possible. However, longevity in and of itself is not the marker of success or social capital that Riley suggests, nor is it necessarily indicative of community improvement.

*Kristen Gustavson, University of California, Berkeley*

Doris Marie Provine, *Unequal under Law: Race in the War on Drugs*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007. \$45.00 hardcover, \$18.50 papercover.

Nearly forty years since the official beginning of the War on Drugs, a broad consensus has grown that the drug war has not only been a failure, but one that is accompanied by intolerable social and economic costs. This author adds to the literature documenting these negative consequences and social injustices by offering a critical analysis about the ways in which race is inextricably tied to the drug war in the United States, both in the development of punitive drug policies and their disproportionately deleterious effect on minority communities.

At the heart of this analysis is the investigation into whether or not the United States is a "fully functioning democracy" committed to the tenets of equality espoused by the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. The author argues that, in fact and in impact, the policies of the drug war maintain the pre-Civil Rights racialized hierarchy that oppresses minorities, particularly African Americans. For the author, this is most

evident in the case of mandatory minimum sentencing laws for crack cocaine, which creates a 100:1 disproportionate sentencing structure between crack (a so-called "Black" drug) and powder cocaine (a so-called "White" drug). This book contextualizes this startling disparity within a detailed history of how drug policy in the United States has consistently been shaped by unfounded and racist fears.

While it is perhaps more well-known that the criminalization of drugs such as opium and marijuana have been motivated by racism, the racist rationale underlying the Prohibition legislation of the 1920s has previously received little attention and this book provides new insight to the "original" drug war. Moreover, the author offers interesting parallels to other policies that have been racially motivated; for example, the disenfranchisement of African Americans resulting from the loss of civil rights due to imprisonment for drug offenses is likened to the Jim Crow laws of the 1960s. Throughout her analysis, the author provides extensive evidence that support her argument of the persistence of racism in the drug legal system of the United States—which is essential in establishing objectivity and legitimacy in a debate fraught with ideology and rhetoric.

However, this book is certainly not dispassionate and the author frequently uses language that may be called biased by those who do not agree with her position (or the truth by those who do). Additionally, there are a few inconsistencies and gaps that occasionally weaken her argument. For example, her major argument is that the source of racism in current drug policy is institutional, derived from a path-dependent effect of past overtly racist laws; yet, the author in a few instances delves into ponderings about the unknown, and possibly intentional, racist motivations of crack laws and aversive racism due to the workings of human psychological processing. The author also does not explain why the phenomenon of the recent methamphetamine "epidemic," which followed a very similar legislative pattern as crack, has been associated with lower-class White people. The issue of class is never addressed on its own, which may have provided additional richness to her argument. Despite these small quibbles, this book is well written, extremely readable and engaging; the

work represents a sophisticated academic analysis, yet is easily accessible to the lay reader.

*Christine Lou, University of California, Berkeley*

David Wagner, *Ordinary People: In and Out of Poverty in the Gilded Age*. Boulder, CO.: Paradigm, 2008. \$24.95 papercover.

A Gallup poll once asked which is more to blame for poverty—lack of individual effort or circumstances beyond one's control? One-third of respondents opted for lack of individual effort, one-third for circumstances; one-third felt both were responsible. The history of social welfare reveals how those beliefs have shaped societal responses to poverty. *Ordinary People* is a remarkable examination of poverty from 1865 to 1895 during the Gilded Age, a period of rapid urbanization and industrialization, the creation of huge fortunes by entrepreneurs such as the Rockefeller, Carnegie and other "robber barons" and strengthening of social class distinctions and inequalities. Most histories neglect the lives of the poor and other marginalized people since they produced few records, leaving us with very little social welfare history written "from the bottom up."

Wagner, continuing his previous examination of the lives of marginalized people such as the homeless and residents of poorhouses, utilizes "inmate" biographies produced by officials of the Massachusetts State Almshouse at Tewksbury, census data and other records to craft remarkable portraits of "ordinary" people who were forced by circumstances to obtain shelter and support (indoor relief), in a Poor Law institution. Reflecting dominant social values, the biographies attempted to explain what led to the almshouse. Personal failings and "bad" behavior, such as intemperance, were noted; some inmates were "tramps," others were "insane." At the beginning of the Gilded Age, the almshouse housed those who were dependent-children without homes, the elderly and the disabled who were not otherwise cared for, and adults who needed care and shelter. Over time, as specialized institutions developed to care for the mentally ill, children and those who were not "able-bodied," the Tewksbury Almshouse changed