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Chinese Americans and the Politics of Race and Culture.
Sucheng Chan and Madeline Y Hsu (Eds).
Reviewed by Julian Chun-Chung Chow.

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would hardly agree that their grand narrative is now irrelevant and Marxists would argue that the current global recession demands a grand narrative that can challenge the hegemony of a failed capitalist system. Nevertheless, this is a valuable although very expensive addition to the literature which will be a valuable resource for anyone working in the field of international social work today.

James Midgley, University of California, Berkeley

Sucheng Chan and Madeline Y. Hsu (Eds.), *Chinese Americans and the Politics of Race and Culture*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008. \$27.95 papercover.

In recent years, the concept of transnationalism has received significant attention from social science scholars in immigration studies. By definition, the transnationalism discourse primarily focuses on the dual nature of immigration life, traveling between home and host countries. However, different generations of immigrants at various historical periods face problems that are unique to a particular time and place. Surprisingly, modern social science studies of immigration that have adopted a transnationalism framework tend to focus on the present situation, overlooking the historical context in which immigrant groups lived. This limits our understanding of why and how different immigrant groups are treated differently in the U.S., and, perhaps even more importantly, why the same groups have received differential treatment at different times.

The authors of this book, most of whom are historians, provide a detailed and erudite account of what the study of history can offer to fill this knowledge gap. Using the transnationalism framework, they provide compelling evidence that, throughout history, immigration policy often served the international interests of the government rather than the interests of immigrant groups residing in the country. How immigrant groups were treated, therefore, is a dynamic interplay dependent on U.S. relations with the home countries of immigrant groups, and the negotiation of immigrant groups themselves, creating their own place and space in the U.S. Unlike assimila-

tion, the development of inter-racial relations within a transnational framework is neither a linear nor a static process. Cultural understanding between mainstream society and ethnic groups is often undermined by the wider social and political environment.

The authors take on the challenging task of capturing the experience of Chinese Americans as an immigrant and ethnic group in the U.S. over the last two centuries. In her introductory chapter, Sucheng Chan provides a detailed review of the academic and popular literature on Chinese Americans, documenting and analyzing chronologically, the issues that have been discussed since the mid-19th century. In particular, she demonstrates how political events shape the way in which Chinese nationals and Chinese Americans were portrayed. Chan concludes by making a provocative point that "The subjects that authors choose to write about, the tone of the literature produced, and the uses to which knowledge is put all underpin the idea that there are no eternal 'objective' truths" (p. 47). She argues that to increase our understanding of the history of any given immigrant group, we must first confront our own biases.

The seven essays that follow are also organized chronologically, covering a wide array of issues in Chinese American community life over the years. These issues include fighting the right to public school education during the Chinese Exclusion era; organizing community activism and political participation in war time; fitting-in to the mainstream society with commercialization during and after World War II; forming racial identity and resolving cultural conflicts between Chineseness and Americanization; and embracing community self-support and social entrepreneurship in modern time.

This is a remarkable collection of papers, all well-written. Together, these papers provide a comprehensive picture demonstrating how internal and external forces intertwined with culture and politics to shape the Chinese American community. They will not only be appreciated by scholars in Chinese American studies but by readers from many different fields who will appreciate the detailed documentation, critical analysis, and thought-provoking insights that the authors offer. They not only help us understand past discriminatory

immigration struggles, but encourage an exploration of how we can improve inter-racial relations, and facilitate immigration incorporation now and in the future.

Julian Chun-Chung Chow, University of California, Berkeley

Alex Vitale, *City of Disorder: How the Quality of Life Campaign Transformed New York Politics*. New York: New York University Press, 2008. \$40.00 hardcover, \$20.00 paper-cover.

Times Square is now a striking emblem of New York City's "quality of life" campaign and "zero tolerance" policing, defining features of the Giuliani administration. Once a seedy refuge for prostitution, drug dealing, X-rated films, and panhandling—dark and dangerous but also exotic and even, for many, alluring—it has now been "Disney-fied," say many, turned into a safe and antiseptic destination for tourists, complete with an Applebee's® and a vast array of corporate brand stores. Other New York neighborhoods underwent similar transformations in the 1990s, as public space was "reclaimed," "order" was restored, and the visible markers of poverty and social disorganization were scrubbed away like so much graffiti. Crime is down, tourism is up, and New York is no longer, as *Times* film critic Vincent Canby wrote in 1974, "a metaphor for what looks like the last days of American civilization."

Alex Vitale's *City of Disorder* offers a rich and thoughtful account of these transformations, although his subtitle does him a small disservice: what makes this book distinct is that it is not merely another recounting of the results of Rudolph Giuliani's efforts to restore order but is instead a more nuanced and historically-informed examination of how three decades of local politics and policymaking created conditions so favorable for this aggressive new regime. It's a story of causes as much as consequences. Not content to single out Republican Mayor Giuliani for blame or credit, Vitale traces the rise of intensive policing and the criminalization (but not ameliorization) of poverty and homelessness to the failures (and complicity) of urban liberals. While he notes, as others have, that many