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**Review of *Human Rights in the United States: Beyond Exceptionalism*. Shareen Hertel & Kathryn Libal, (Eds). Reviewed by Judith Blau.**

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and a second set of supervising eyes. Yes, poor neighborhoods are often characterized by criminal activity and low levels of collective efficacy. *None* of this is news.

Murray largely discounts the larger structural changes in the economy as contributing to the fate of the lower class and their retreat from the "founding virtues." He quickly dismisses macroeconomic forces causing declining real wages for less educated men. Absent are discussions of spatial mismatch, discrimination, and access to a decent education, factors that might constrain even the "cognitively-gifted" in the lower class from ever realizing their potential. Altogether, he chooses to "focus on what happened, not why" (p. 12) and fails to discuss research that unpacks why we see many of these worrisome trends. How can one suggest a solution when one does not understand the causes?

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Shareen Hertel & Kathryn Libal, (Eds). *Human Rights in the United States: Beyond Exceptionalism* (2011). Cambridge University Press. \$99.00 hardcover; \$36.99 paperback.

The chapters in this volume exhibit a uniformly high quality, and, moreover, span a wide spectrum of human rights, discussed below. In appended materials, the editors helpfully include The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. There is a consistent emphasis on praxis.

The editors and authors of this volume make and clarify the important link between progressivism and human rights. D. Q. Thomas proposes in the Foreword that the broad perspective of human rights is a framework for an alternative and affirmative brand of progressive American politics; progressives can finally come out of the cold. What then are the challenges that progressives face? A few include the following: (1) transforming our criticality into a positive agenda; (2) recognizing that a limitation of our Bill of Rights is that most articles are cast as negative rights ("Congress shall make no law...")

rather than as positive rights to employment, food, etc.; and (3) moving boldly out of the margins of American political life into the broad stream.

The chapters span the expanse of human rights, highlighting America's official distance from international human rights. In Section I, Hassmann provides a comparative perspective on human rights in industrialized countries; Abramovitz discusses welfare in the U.S.; Albisa reviews the role of the Supreme Court; and Kaufman contends that local institutions need to play a role in translating international human rights treaties and conventions. In Section II, chapter authors highlight the great and deep significance it would have if the U.S. adopted human rights. That is, human rights are cut of one cloth, whether they be the rights of women (Merry & Shimmin), the rights of children (Todres), or the rights to health care (Zaidi). Authors of chapters in Section III examine the impact of inequalities relating to persons with disabilities (Stein & Lord), indigenous peoples (Berger), mother-headed families (Neubeck), LGBT persons (Mertus), and victims of disasters (Finger & Luft).

What the recession and horrific economic inequalities in the U.S. have brought about—understandably not predicted by the authors—is the Occupy Wall Street movement (OWS), which I contend would have been embraced by the authors of *Human Rights in the United States*, had the book not already been in publication.

Americans (left-left, left, socialists, anarchists, or center) have failed to recognize international human rights doctrine and law. This is an important point of departure for the editors and authors. While their emphasis is on the importance of grassroots activism and public discourse, I would have liked more discussion of the failure of the United States to ratify international human rights treaties, such as those of the Organization of American States. Progressives have little traction when it comes to defending, say, the right to earn a living, when that right is relegated to Congress, politicians, unions or when that right is trivialized altogether. Likewise, we have little traction about the rights of the people compared with the rights of corporations. The authors seem to recognize the implications of the U.S.'s non-ratification of treaties, but

not those for human rights or corporate personhood rights. For example, corporations that manage apartment complexes can impose outrageous regulations on residents, and towns cannot intervene, for instance requiring that residents must walk directly from their cars or bus stop to their apartments without stopping to talk with other residents. If it is taken for granted by Americans that they only have civil and political rights and that corporations' rights are on a par with persons' rights (sometimes trumping them), we have a lot of hard work ahead of us. Using this as a text, I would supplement it with OWS materials (twitter feeds, FaceBook pages, and web pages). I would (and do) give course credit to students who engage the occupiers in a conversation about the relevance of human rights to the Occupy movement. This is entirely consistent with the activist orientation of the editors and authors of this fine book.

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Greg J. Duncan & Richard Murnane, (Eds.). *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools and Children's Life Chances* (2011). New York & Chicago: Russell Sage & Spencer Foundations. \$49.95 (paperback).

In the wake of recent national debates about widening disparities in wealth and income in American society, *Whither Opportunity: Rising Inequality, Schools and Children's Life Chances* is a particularly timely and poignant publication. In this large edited volume of 25 studies, the authors attempt to disentangle the relationship between growing income inequality in America and its impact upon student achievement, educational attainment and labor market outcomes for children from low and high income families. Collectively, the studies provide a powerful and compelling reminder that disparities in educational achievement and life outcomes between poor and affluent children are not merely related to what happens while they are in school, but are also profoundly affected by what is occurring outside of school in their homes and communities. The authors also point out that, despite numerous policy