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Evelyn Nakano Glenn

Unequal Freedom: How Race and Gender Shaped American Citizenship and Labor

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Constituting American Modernity

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Evelyn Nakano Glenn's *Unequal Freedom* is a superbly put together account of how race and gender inequities in the United States are both structured and contested in the arenas of labor and citizenship, ostensibly the private and public arenas of life in liberalism. She juxtaposes the histories of Mexican Americans in the Southwest, African Americans in the South, and Japanese Americans in Hawaii from Reconstruction through the Progressive era between 1870–1930 to show that although universal citizenship rights were allegedly accessible to all those who held formal citizenship, those deemed persons of color were excluded. The resistances against oppression by these communities of color in these three regions where agriculture dominated the economy transformed the meanings attributed to labor and citizenship.

This book is an absolutely crucial intervention on the debates on citizenship, effectively questioning critiques of race activism in present-day United States. Conservatives' take on race politics – their misreadings of American history as all-inclusive with perhaps slavery as an unfortunate aberration, their rather standard arguments that communities of color illiberally politicize race and destroy so-called American ideals of non-sectarianism and equality – are not worth rehashing here. But on the other hand we have progressives, who say they are rooted in socially emancipatory traditions, but will argue that race politics are merely palliative measures that do not

fundamentally alter the structuring principles of inequality. Nakano Glenn instead demonstrates with detailed empirical rigor that social movements launched by communities of color pushed towards deepening participatory democracy along gender, race and, crucially, along class lines as well. Movements for racial equality supported and nurtured in the subaltern public spaces of Buddhist temples, churches, ethnic newspapers, and ethnic unions sought to expand the civil, political and social rights of citizenship so that racialized communities too could access a modicum of the good life. Such activism, which pushed for things as diverse as the ownership of one's own labor, ability to vote, and access to social amenities fundamentally contributed to labor movements in the nation, extended universal suffrage, and expanded the meanings of the social rights associated with citizenship. For example, there had been resistance to publicly supported education for the working class right up to the 1880s in the South. But in the face of extensive education among Blacks after Reconstruction urban industrialists, white farmers and workers began to see that schools were a space where black and white children could be socialized to accept southern white hierarchy. 'The presence of literate Blacks alongside illiterate whites,' Nakano Glenn writes, 'seemed to contradict the doctrine of white superiority' (2002: 140). In a rather perverse way, the educational achievements of African Americans consolidated public schooling for working-class whites as well. Hence Nakano Glenn convincingly establishes that race movements do not bring about merely palliative remedies. Instead, race politics both intentionally and unintentionally deepen democracy, thus leading to social transformations at fundamental levels.

The critique I have of *Unequal Freedoms* is that the argument leads us to the view, but does not make the case as strongly as it could, that in liberal regimes only through the subordination of some communities can the freedoms of others materialize; that race/ gender not only shape and are shaped by citizenship, but in the process make nation too; that an American democracy posited as the model for much of the world today is possible only through imperial projects at home and the world. Nakano Glenn stops just short to only summarize that 'in the United States race and gender have been simultaneously organizing principles and products of citizenship and labor' (2002: 236).

As we read *Unequal Freedoms* we cannot help but observe that the modern nation state is premised on egalitarian principles, yet is birthed only through exploitations and exclusions. To explain what at first glance seems an anomaly, I wish the book had explored how the practices of citizenship mediate the relationship between state and nation. States are modern bureaucratic associations that claim legitimate dominance of society within a territory. Though they are bureaucratic structures, they do not derive their effectiveness from operating in monolithic ways but, instead, state

practices are inflected by local customs and traditions. It is not a contradiction when, for example, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo between the Mexican and US governments promised that Mexicans in the Southwest would be conferred 'all the rights of citizens of the United States according to the principles of the Constitution' (2002: 146), but ground realities revealed otherwise. That is exactly the way states operate; they fluctuate in their practices over time and space. However, the one aspect on which they remain constant is in their need to contain challenges that threaten their existence as political entities. One way they contain challenges to their existence is the selective incorporation and exclusion of persons through extending citizenship rights and responsibilities.

The nation, unlike the state, is a psychological bond that ties people to each other and differentiates them from perceived outsiders. The knowledge of being a nation is an emotional rather than a rational conviction. Anthony Marx notes that states endorse nation, which he defines 'as the popular loyalty of a population held together in being obliged to serve and be served by the state. By encouraging allegiance to the nation, states enhance their claimed monopoly of legitimacy' (1998: 4). Granting rights and entailing responsibilities to persons selectively – the differential actualization of citizenship – are pivotal to how the American state facilitates American nationhood. The conferring of citizenship selectively to different groups of individuals and the codification of their unequal rights and responsibilities forms the very core of nation building. A strong nation, on the other hand, sustains the legitimacy of the American state.

While citizenship is commonly conceived as being concerned solely with passports and bundles of rights/responsibilities, we cannot help but notice that it is underlined by cultural contents as well. This culture, a national habitus if you will, makes a cohesive polity. Culture forms a common citizenry whereby people imagine themselves as sharing destinies, embracing identical value systems, and upholding collective goals for their polity. Lisa Lowe points out that 'the legal and political forms of the nation have required a national culture for the integration of differentiated people and social spaces that make up "America," a national culture, broadly cast yet singularly engaging, that can inspire diverse individuals to identify with the national project' (1996: 2). The United States as an idea is constructed by liberal democratic principles, yet in practice these liberal principles are frequently sacrificed at the altar of nation building. And the fault-lines along which these liberal principles have shattered are invariably racial lines. African Americans figured into the American constitution but only at a ratio where one slave was equal to three-fifths of a free person. The incorporation of Mexican Americans into the United States in the late 1800s was not something they willed, but instead was the will of imperial expansion. And the building of a 20th-century America was fundamentally premised on its imperial designs in Asia; Japanese Americans, arriving as

laborers, were initially conceived as sojourners and were later ambiguously and uneasily incorporated as 'forever foreigners.'

The very same time period that Evelyn Nakano Glenn examines, 1870–1930, also witnessed a massive influx of southern and eastern Europeans into the United States. Arriving as industrial laborers, these Slavic, Polish, Jewish, Iberic, and Mediterranean peoples were not quite white in the early part of the 20th-century. Yet, by the 1930s their absorption into whiteness was consolidated, and entire classifications of the European races had disappeared from the American landscape. These European immigrants had accessed whiteness and full American citizenship – legally, substantively, and culturally – through sacrifice. To gain admission into 'Americanhood' they were mandated to give up the cultural, linguistic, and religious particularities of their sending nations. Becoming American for these immigrants was a high modernist transformation, whereby the fabric of older cultures had to be rent asunder to give birth to a new American with abstract, secular ideals of individuality and non-communitarian belonging. By the end of the 1930s the 'almost white but not quite' eastern and southern Europeans now stood as a more or less singular white race in contrast to blacks, Mexican Americans, and Asian Americans. While an abstract individualism, transcending race, was afforded to these newly arrived Europeans, those deemed persons of color could never escape the ascriptive attributes of race defined variously and arbitrarily by geographies, phenotypes, and religions. A uniquely American modernity – notions of a self-made man, rugged individualism, emancipation, independence, democracy, and personal freedom – developed in tandem with the shackling down of communities of color.

Unequal Freedoms is an excellent book on how race and gender are the structuring and the structured principles of citizenship. The sociology of race/ethnicity has so far not seen a work as empirically broad yet detailed on the subject, and Evelyn Nakano Glenn's work will stand as a benchmark for sociological accounts of race and citizenship. Yet, I wish the book had pushed further to show that the unequal freedoms associated with race and the modern American nation state have emerged together. Indeed, the modern American nation state could be birthed only through selectively exclusionary practices. Unequal freedom in the United States is not an exception to the rule, but instead is the very core constitutive element of the nation, forming the foundations for masculine white freedom, independence and democracy.

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Studying race–gender inequality in the 21st-century

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Evelyn Nakano Glenn's *Unequal Freedom* is a *tour de force*. It is a must-read for scholars interested in historical processes of racialization and engendering in the United States and, more generally, for all those concerned with inequality. Undertaking a comparative regional focus from the end of Reconstruction to the eve of World War II, Glenn traces how race and gender issues framed struggles over citizenship and labor among dichotomous dominant-subordinate groups in three particular regions of the United States: between blacks and whites in the South; Mexicans and Anglos in the Southwest; and Japanese and Haoles (the local term for white planters) in Hawaii. The work provides an innovative approach and new insights into how race and gender interlock in the development of oppressive social structures and forms of resistance to them.

Glenn sets out as her theoretical goal to conceptualize race and gender within the same analytical plane, moving beyond their treatment as separate fields of scholarly inquiry. In order to accomplish this she turns to social constructionism in the poststructuralist tradition. Rejecting one-sided approaches that emphasize either cultural representation or material relations, she seeks to draw out 'a dialogical relation' (p. 15) between the two. The result, in her words, is 'a synthesis of social constructionist streams within critical race and feminist studies [that] offers a framework of integrated analysis' (p. 17). Glenn identifies what for her are the two key institutional sites that have been central to the structuring of race–gender

inequalities: citizenship and the labor market. Inequality and domination are reproduced in the first by the denial of citizenship (full membership in the community) and in the second through diverse forms of coerced as opposed to free labor.

Glenn then proceeds to deftly apply the approach to a historical-comparative analysis of blacks and whites in the South, Mexicans and Anglos in the Southwest, and Japanese and Haoles in Hawaii. The study covers the period from 1870 to 1930 and draws on a broad corpus of established scholarship rather than on original data collection or research in primary sources. What comes through with clarity across the three 'local' cases is the systematic connection between the denial of citizenship as the political counterpart to the imposition of coercive systems of labor control. Glenn emphasizes the contested nature of these power relations, focusing not only on the behavior of dominant groups, but also on the agency of the diverse subordinate groups, including the struggle among women for equality and among racially oppressed groups for inclusion. Race and gender are shown to be interwoven at every level. In the white working class family, for instance, a family wage for men allowed them to achieve control over women in the domestic sphere whereas these same white women, when they entered the labor market, as well as men and women from the racially oppressed groups, were denied a family wage. These material relations were shaped and reinforced by particular racialized concepts of manliness and womanhood. Gender is shown to be a marker in racial difference across all three regions, with white women generally charged with responsibility for maintaining the 'purity' of whiteness.

This is a masterful study. There is much minor detail with which one could quibble in the finely textured empirical narratives but I will not trouble with these details. Instead, I wish to highlight two broader concerns. First is what I perceive to be an underdeveloped theoretical framework, introduced in Chapter 1 (a mere 11 pages!) that does not seem commensurate with the rich historical and analytical narrative that constitutes the core of the study. Second is the national-level focus on the United States to explain phenomena that in my view can only be understood in a *world-historic* context, symptomatic perhaps of the US-centric parochialism of a significant portion of ethnic/race (and to an extent, gender) studies in US sociology. Mindful of space constraints, I can only allude here in brief to these concerns.

Race, class and gender have been recognized in the past two decades as the major axes of inequality, but how to conceptualize and theorize the relation among the three has vexed social scientists and generated sharp polemics. One of the major contributions of *Unequal Freedom* is to draw out in new ways the relation between race and gender. But I do not think Glenn has given adequate theoretical treatment to class. To be sure, she systematically deploys class analysis. But class is not integrated into the

theoretical model and appears to be reduced to the institutional category of labor.

I suggest that this points to a broader problem with much western scholarship on race and gender in recent decades, which took a 'wrong turn' with the demise of the structuralism of the 1960s and 1970s. Instead of a return to the *dialectic* of structure and agency, the poststructural turn seemed to discount structure, while the postmodern turn reduced agency to mere representation. Political economy became maligned as race and gender were reduced to free-floating significations. Glenn explicitly rejects this narrow focus, emphasizing both representation and material relations. Yet the lack of theoretical treatment of class, and its seeming reduction from a fundamental social relation to an institutional site (the labor market), appear as an ineluctable outcome of poststructural analysis. Whereas Glenn emphasizes in her brief theoretical chapter that race and gender are relational she does not treat class in a similar fashion. She seems to make it categorical, reduced to one's standing in the labor market. This is a Weberian approach to class as a market location, as if each agent brought to the labor market their racialized and gendered status.

Let me link this to another pitfall. The demise of structuralism allowed critical scholars to return agency to the study of inequality. We could now trace, for instance, how different groups protagonized the racialization process, how whiteness was created, and Others constructed. It allowed us to historicize race and gender in new ways as fluid processes involving boundaries that are continuously contested and shifting. But the poststructural approach prohibited us by epistemological fiat from theorizing any underlying ordering principles, that is, historical or structural determinations that in the first place give rise to class formation, racialization and engendering, and that could give some underlying conceptual unity to the race, class, and gender triad. Social constructionism, with its poststructural grounding, does not acknowledge such underlying ordering principles, so that social constructions are always contingent, even voluntaristic.

The poststructural approach accorded an 'independent' status to race, gender and class, which meant substituting the dialectic relationship between the three as internal elements of some underlying process for a formal (external) relationship among them as independent structures. An *internal relation* is one in which each part is constituted in its relation to the other, so that one cannot exist without the other and only has meaning when seen within the relation. Hence, race, class, and gender relations are *analytically distinct* and are *constitutive of each other* within a larger system of social relations. But giving an 'independent' status to these categories implies an *external relation*, in which each part has an existence independent of its relation to the other. Although justified as an effort to get beyond the reduction of race and gender to class, in practice the poststructural approach undermined our ability to uncover internal linkages among these

distinct sets of relationships via some underlying (that is, more primary) historic process. I suggest – no matter how unpopular in the face of the predominance of the poststructural approach that informs much critical race and feminist studies – that race and gender do not have an independent status.

Race, class, and gender form an internally-related nexus grounded in the basic ordering principles of the material relations of production and reproduction. I do not agree with Glenn that race and gender ‘displace class as the primary axes of exclusion’ (p. 29) because this formulation obscures the internal relations that bind together race and gender with class. If race and gender are ‘mutually constitutive,’ as Glenn affirms, then race–gender inequality can only be understood in the same mutually constitutive relation to class structures that emerge out of processes of production and reproduction as they unfold in particular historical settings. Our task is to uncover how race and gender became mutually constitutive with class relations.

This is to argue that these historical processes of production and reproduction *are* causal to race–gender inequalities. To put it another way, race–gender inequality *is* subsumed under a broader (‘more primary’) historical process. It is ironic that Glenn’s actual historical analyses of the three regional US cases show unambiguously how class and political economy drive race–gender inequalities, in that particular groups of people are brought forcefully into relations of economic exploitation that are reproduced through coercive political domination (in her construct, the denial of citizenship). To take the case of race and class, it is not that racialization is explained in terms of class but that class itself became racialized in the formative years of the world capitalist system because of the particular history of that system.

This leads to my second concern, Glenn’s national-level US focus. Despite a few references here and there to US imperialist expansion, Glenn focuses on the interplay between the local and the national but never moves us beyond the national (US) level. National-level studies of race and gender in US academia are unsatisfying for two reasons. The first is because it is not possible to understand racial and gender inequality in any one nation outside of the larger world-historic context. The second is because it limits our ability to see the particular in the general and the general in the particular, lending itself to exceptionalist arguments and conceptual inflation. To speak of whiteness and ‘people of color’ in Indonesia, Turkey, Ethiopia, or China, for instance, is not particularly meaningful, yet we know that stratification in these societies involves major racial/ethnic dimensions.

If in this age of globalization it is impossible to understand national phenomena outside of global phenomena, it is just as true that the larger causal and explanatory backdrop to race–gender inequality in the US in past centuries and decades has been the creation and development of the

world capitalist system. Placing the particular stories of blacks and whites in the South US, Mexicans and Anglos in the Southwest US, and Japanese and Haoles in Hawaii into such a broader context would allow generalizing conclusions to be drawn from a particular national-level study and realize the theoretical potential of the study.

There is a diverse and abundant interdisciplinary literature on the world capitalist system, from world-system and dependency theories, to global political economy, Marxist and neo-Marxist theories of imperialism, critical development studies (including women, gender and development), and so forth, that could contribute to grounding Glenn's specific study of race-gender inequality in three 'US' localities within the larger world historic context. Most of this literature places at the center of analysis the same analytical categories that Glenn deploys, such as the distinction between coerced and 'free' forms of labor, the association of distinct forms of political control with differential relations of economic exploitation, and so forth, in explaining racial formation and patriarchal structures at the world level. This literature also offers numerous conceptual tools that could shed further explanatory light on the object of Glenn's study, such as core and periphery dynamics (these both as relational regions and social categories), changing international divisions of labor, periodization in world capitalist development, and so forth. That Glenn chose not to draw on this literature is indicative of the larger problem of compartmentalization within the distinct subsections, or substantive areas, in sociology and the other social science disciplines. There is often little engagement across areas, such as, for example, between scholars of race and gender relations and those of world-systems or critical political economy. Given overlapping concerns we should be talking more with one another across areas (and across disciplines).

As we enter the 21st century, it seems to me to be more important than ever to adopt a transnational/global perspective of race-gender inequality, whether we are studying the present or looking back to reinterpret the past. The creation of a single global labor market is reorganizing and transnationalizing racial, ethnic, and gender hierarchies around the world. The intensified mobilization under global capitalism of newly created transnational labor pools in diverse locations results in new forms of labor market segmentation along racial, ethnic, and gender lines that cut across national boundaries. There is a newly emerging global proletariat made up of hundreds of millions of women and men from all nationalities that labor on the farms, in the factories and the offices of the global economy. Under capitalist globalization, citizenship takes on new meaning as a mechanism of control to distinguish distinct transnationalized labor pools for the purpose of super-exploitation under the tight control of militarized police states. Political exclusion remains a condition for the super-exploitation, or the marginalization, of different groups in the emergent global capitalist

order. Yet to understand these manifold processes we need to imbue our analyses with a theoretically sophisticated understanding of class and with a transnational/global perspective.

Notwithstanding these critical observations, *Unequal Freedom* is likely to become a landmark study of inequality. We should be grateful to Evelyn Nakano Glenn for providing us with such a magnificent work.

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Writing a history of labor and citizenship

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As an exploration of the complex interaction between race, gender, labor and citizenship, Evelyn Nakano Glenn's imaginatively conceived *Unequal Freedom* is an invaluable book. *Unequal Freedom* is a comprehensive historiographical and interpretive essay that above all provides readers with an opportunity for comparisons of different varieties of race relations and gender structures in the United States. Although building on previous studies of race and gender, Glenn sets out in new directions.

Glenn begins *Unequal Freedom* by theorizing that gender boundaries intersect with racial boundaries and devotes herself to explaining the ways both forms were strategically part of the framework of class relations imposed upon American society by elites. As fluid categories, race and gender are mutually reinforcing and are defined in terms of power.

Drawing on T.H. Marshall's all encompassing definition of citizenship rights, Glenn argues that citizenship is a process by which some people are included and others are excluded. Glenn brings new insights in regard to this concept. She makes a distinction between the formal notion embodied in law and policy, and 'substantive citizenship' (p. 53), and further adds that

boundaries between citizens and non-citizens were also maintained on the local level.

Like race and gender, the meaning of the concepts citizenship and labor likewise gain their meaning in relation to one another. Invariably a good citizen was also a producer, a 'worker citizen', because American citizenship, based on classical republican models, was idealized as a 'universal and inclusive' status. These definitions were shaped by, and contrasted with, those individuals excluded from citizenship, an exclusion usually structured along race or gender lines.

Similar to concepts of American identity, the meaning of labor changed as America was transformed from an agricultural-commercial country to an industrial corporate economy. This transformation would shape present and future social relations in America. The ideological residue of the concept of citizenship remained grounded in republicanism; specifically, the concept of 'citizenship' was still linked to 'the Trade'. However, this 'patriotic vision of all productive citizens' now confronted new paths to wealth; new forms of subordination; new social relations in the workplace, namely, new means of time discipline, supervision, and work habits; and new gender roles of labor, with the growth of women workers in the workplace. The first generation of wage-earning women expected wage labor to sustain their 'liberty'. But longer hours and lower wages increasingly restricted the freedom of women factory workers in return for a livelihood. Wage cuts, which triggered the strike waves of the 1830s and 1840s, were perceived by women textile workers as an attack on their economic independence and moreover undermined their sense of dignity and social equality that were such an important element of their Yankee heritage. In their struggles against injustice, wage-earning women, these 'Daughters of Free Men,' were affirming the notion of independence they understood as being the basis of Republican ideology. The rural origin of women gave their protests and strikes strong ties to pre-industrial traditions, and they were linking their protests to the tradition of the American Revolutionary War.

Nevertheless, women had risen to the challenge of wage work out of proud independence. Wage-earning women, however, got little support from the larger public because their notion of liberty violated 19th-century sensibilities about female roles. Critics who responded publicly to women strikers attacked their femininity. Women strikers were betraying the behavior expected of all women; moreover, they were challenging public order by moving toward independent work for wages. Those who now continued to work did so largely out of necessity. Wage work became the refuge of the poor, those without male support, black, and immigrant women.

Early 19th-century notions about white male independence were fastened to the concept of 'free labor' and were deemed oppositional to unfree labor, which became racialized as 'non-white.' America was bedeviled by the race question and was rife with racism. Anti-black sentiment in the

north grew bitter after the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863. The Proclamation stirred fears of black competition to new heights, anticipation that there would be an influx of hordes of blacks into factories and shops. Rendered free through emancipation, industrial capitalism utilized other ways to subject black labor to forms of coercive control and got help from the federal government. The federal government ordered military expulsions of blacks from southern estates and president Andrew Johnson enacted the Black Codes of 1865–66. Black freedmen were restored to a situation of quasi-slavery tied to the land by law; they were compelled to accept whatever wages were offered them and worked under share arrangements that forced them into long-term indebtedness. President Johnson in essence opposed granting land, citizenship, and the right to vote to blacks because he believed to do so would cheapen white labor.

In the late 19th- and early 20th-centuries, industrial capitalism turned the debilitating effect that racial and gender divisions exacted on worker solidarity to their advantage. This became clear when employers combated organized worker resistance to de-skilling, low wages, and bad working conditions. Employers unleashed campaigns of violence and intimidation and enjoyed the distinct advantage of seeking cheaper and presumably more easily controlled groups of workers. In times of labor upheaval, many non-white workers were imported to break strikes. In this way, employers deliberately manipulated racial divisions and stirred up racial animosity as well by creating competition between whites and non-whites.

The emergent forms of coercive labor systems were most common in areas dominated by commodity agriculture and extractive industries, notes Glenn. Employers took advantage of existing racial divisions and the vulnerability of non-white workers to erect barriers to resistance. The unique constellation of vagrancy laws, debt peonage, and contract labor was central to racial subordination. Integral to the labor system, racial and gender protocol was consciously refashioned to reflect new political, social, and economic developments. Preconceived notions that women workers were unreliable remained unaltered.

In her carefully crafted study, Glenn's discussion of race, gender, citizenship, and labor creates a common framework for her analysis of political and social relations between dominant and subordinate groups in the South, the south-west, and Hawaii. White employers universally defined citizenship in ways that excluded blacks, Mexicans and Japanese from political rights and devised various strategies to exploit their labor. However, each subordinate group overcame formidable obstacles to mount effective challenges.

For example, as a result of the economic hardships of the Reconstruction era, there were efforts at self-organization by black workers. In the rural areas of the South, blacks formed paramilitary Union Leagues that called for equitable wages and working hours, marketing rights, household

goods, gardens, and livestock. In the urban areas, blacks established fraternal organizations and cooperatives and began to organize and strike to improve their conditions. For example, black shoremen in Charleston, South Carolina formed the Longshoremen's Protective Union Association and won a strike for higher wages, while black dockworkers in Savannah, Georgia went on strike against the poll tax. In 1869, blacks held a national labor convention to protest dual unionism owing to the racism of the all-white National Labor Union. The convention attendees call for land, schools, the continuation of the Freedman's Bureau, the formation of black cooperatives, and for opening all doors to employment to black women. The histories of black worker resistance are endless.

In the Southwest, occupational and wage disparities, founded on the assertion that Mexicans were racially unsuitable and lacked the qualities the better jobs required, underscored the region's distinct labor relations. By the end of the 19th-century, Anglos had consolidated their economic and political power in the Southwest. Mexicans became the main source of low-wage labor in the region as a dual labor market based on race developed. To fill the great demand for farm labor, displaced peons and rancheros from Mexico were recruited to work in Texas. These events resulted in a dramatic change in Texas Mexican-Anglo relations. Mexicans in Texas now found themselves treated as an inferior race; they were segregated into their own quarters, and refused admittance into public places. Newly-arrived Anglos did not distinguish between the Mexican elite and the Mexican laboring classes – both types were the same: Mexican.

Glenn reminds us the Southwest was more varied in the local practices used to determine the link between race and one's citizenship status. Given Glenn's emphasis on citizenship, she omits that some Mexican Americans began to embrace whiteness to overcome Jim Crow and the social stigma of being Mexican, a label designating race not citizenship. League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) members constructed new identities as Latin Americans or Spanish Americans in order to access the privileges of whiteness irrevocably denied to immigrant Mexicans, blacks, Chinese, and Indians. LULAC also contested the United States Census establishing a separate category for Mexicans – relegating any person of Mexican descent who was not white to the category. What's more, there is no elaboration of the intra-ethnic conflict that characterized relations between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans

Notwithstanding, Glenn's comparisons of the similarities and the different patterns of race, labor – and to a less extent gender – with citizenship in the South, the Southwest, and in Hawaii is the greatest strength of *Unequal Freedom*. The way Glenn sets these local and particular situations in the context of national events and policies provides scholars a new lens through which to view the way racial hierarchies are fashioned, operate, and are contested. *Unequal Freedom* is similar to Gary Gerstle's *American Crucible*

in its fundamental investigation of the changing and often opposing ideas about the basic nature of American society: is the United States a melting pot or is American citizenship reserved only for those who are white?

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RACE AND GENDER IN HISTORIES UNTOLD

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One of our most difficult tasks as scholars in ‘re-telling’ the story of events past is to simplify the many pieces of history that are made available to us into a single coherent theme that makes sense of the world around us. By viewing history through the categorical lens of ‘theory,’ however, we often-times risk overlooking the views of internally marginalized groups and essentializing the context-dependent nature of the phenomenon we are studying. In this light, *Unequal Freedom* by Evelyn Nakano Glenn represents an ambitious and novel effort to re-conceptualize the history of American race relations through the eyes of multiple actors within their respective local contexts. Glenn’s book is a compelling historical documentary on how the collectivist spirits of communities of color were systematically assaulted by the growing ideological and capitalist machinery of white America; it is also a testament to the local struggles and acts of resistance that shaped America in unimaginable ways. Based on a synthesis of other historical works and regional case studies, Glenn demonstrates how the persistence of race- and gender-based ideologies and hierarchies underlay America’s idealistic transition to a democratic society built on free labor in the late 19th-/early 20th-centuries.

Glenn offers the audience ground-breaking research on the multiple paths and intersections that shaped the experiences of different minority groups in this tumultuous period of American history. Still, some may argue that the author's goal is almost too ambitious and comprehensive in its approach, which leads her to gloss over several central points that would tighten her underlying conceptual framework. Because the book does make brief mention of some of these key points, the following comments are not meant to fill any 'gaps' in her analysis, but, rather, to bring out themes that seem to warrant greater attention. In particular, I focus on the two tenets of her book that highlight both its underlying strengths and weaknesses – one focused on citizenship and labor and the other on the intersections of race and gender.

REFLECTIONS ON CITIZENSHIP AND LABOR

In the first half of the book, Glenn traces the historical development of citizenship and labor systems in the United States through the conceptual nodes of race and gender. On a theoretical note, the author calls attention to the fluctuating and context-dependent nature of both race and gender and argues for a more integrative approach that recognizes both the cultural meanings and structural foundations that make both systems such powerful axes of social organization. Drawing on the tradition of scholarly works by Edward Said, Patricia Hill Collins and others, the compelling part of her argument focuses on both the 'relational' and 'intersectional' components of stratification systems. That is, race- and gender-based hierarchies should be understood not in isolation from one another but as systems that take shape in relation to one another. Thus, white male privilege has meaning only when defined in relation to 'the Other.' Furthermore, location at the nexus of race and gender (as in the case of women of color) does not merely 'add' to one's oppression but in fact 'multiplies' it because of their dual oppression both within the racial community and outside of it.

From here, Glenn sets out to re-tell the story of citizenship and labor in America. To this end, she re-examines the evolution of American citizenship – from its exclusive origins in white male proprietorship to a more 'open' membership based on notions of equality and natural rights. The author finds that, as opposed to opening the doors to women and minorities, this new definition of citizenship in fact reinforced the boundaries between man and woman and whites and non-whites by designating women as 'dependents' and non-whites as 'non-citizens' unworthy of or unfit for political rights. This transformation coincided with so-called progressive trends in labor systems that expanded the domains of privilege to 'free wage labor.' Again, women and minorities were relegated to the status of unfree

labor as women became increasingly isolated within the private domestic sphere and minorities, particularly blacks, were trapped in slavery or virtual servitude. Even when the concept of free labor became universally inclusive, minority groups were unable to claim the privileges accorded to free white workers, because they were systematically stripped of both their land and only means of self-subsistence in different ways.

Overall, Glenn provides a comprehensive and well-informed historical account that avoids the pitfalls of viewing history through a dichotomous lens. At the same time, the book's greatest strength turns out to be one of its central weaknesses. For one, it can be argued that the author is trying to accomplish too many things at once – whether it is demonstrating the differential effects of white male privilege on systems of race, gender, and to some degree, class; the ways in which these relations are both relational and intersectional; their manifestations in interlocked cultural and structural systems of labor and citizenship; and variations that emerge among different racial/ethnic minority groups from the local to the national context. In the end, the book's central argument becomes disjointed and muddled because of its multiple goals and points of emphasis.

For this reason, it is difficult to answer broader, conceptual questions about race relations in America. For instance, what prompted the various fluctuations in race relations we saw from the local to the national level? Glenn gives us a number of clues, such as political partisanship, US imperialistic policies abroad, shifts in the industrial economy and its accompanying labor needs, shifting trends in American culture, the threat of black achievement, competition and assertiveness, different demographic trends, and the presence/absence of federal support, among other things. Granted, all of these factors came to play in the case of American race relations, but how does this all come together and what does this mean for the present and future development of race and gender relations in the United States?

Despite its noble intentions, the historical account itself falls short of an integrated and nuanced analysis, which can bring together the various interconnections and intersections that mediate relations between the oppressed and the oppressor, as well as groups marginalized within (e.g. black women, working-class black women, etc.). Here it is important to distinguish between the concept that Glenn was seeking to employ and the ways in which the history was actually told. Although the second half of the book is interspersed with references to groups at the intersections of racial and gender oppression, the findings as a whole do not consistently follow through with the book's conceptual aim for a relational/intersectional approach to race and gender. For example, in the chapter on citizenship, Glenn argues that America's transformation from a citizenry based on land ownership to one based on free-labor was built on the assertion of white male privilege. However, the feminization/domestication of white women

and the racialization of black slaves seem to be portrayed as the contradictory effects, not the causes, of America's changing notions of independent citizenship under British colonialism. Thus, rather than emphasizing the relationality between white men to white women to black men to black women, the author chooses to focus on the dual *but separate* impact of white male citizenship on white women and black slaves.

Glenn is mindful of these interconnections, but she underplays this relational aspect in her historical accounts, especially in the first few chapters. Furthermore, the evidence is analyzed primarily through the role of white male privilege, with less consideration for the ways in which white women themselves may have constructed their identity and worth in relation to black servitude. In this sense, white men seem to be the instigators, while white women passively played into their propaganda. For example, one of her compelling points in later chapters is that white men exaggerated the sexual threat imposed by black men by acting as the protectors of white women's virtues, thereby asserting their authority over both groups. In order to inject a more original perspective to her research, it would have been interesting to see how this type of 'triangular' relationality also shaped notions of citizenship and free labor. Did white males develop a sense of identity by playing white women's domesticity against black men/women's second-class citizenship or Mexican/Japanese non-citizenship? Were there any perceived differences between the citizenry of minority men in relation to minority women?

Related to this, there may be something to be said about the ways in which the identities of white women also depended on their active construction of 'the Other.' For instance, one way in which white middle-class women were able to find some sort of empowerment outside the home (albeit within the confines of traditional domestic roles) was to 'clean up' immigrants and blacks in the city and turn them into model citizens through social services (Spain, 2001). Although we should not disregard the importance of such services in uplifting these communities, it may be argued that such paternalistic relationships fed on both racialized and gendered roles, allowing one group to find a piece of salvation through another group's denigration.

AT THE NEXUS OF RACE AND GENDER

Based on regional case studies of three different minority groups, the second half of the book perhaps represents the author's most valuable contribution to current scholarship. In these chapters, Glenn structures her argument around localized race relations between blacks and whites in the South, Mexicans and Anglos in the Southwest, and Asians and haoles in

Hawaii in the late 19th-/early 20th-centuries. In so doing, she not only contextualizes the dynamics of racial stratification for groups in different regions of the United States, but also provides critical insights derived from the 'hidden transcripts' of minority communities (as opposed to relying solely on the formal, legal documents of elites and government officials). This type of approach becomes particularly important in the case of 'in-between' groups like Mexicans and South Asians, who, during certain periods, may have been legally ascribed as 'white' but were in practice accorded the ambiguous disadvantages of being 'non-white.' These chapters also pay more attention to the intersections and dynamics of relationality that characterize race- and gender-based social structures by explaining the connection of, and adding references to, the diverse experiences of women of color.

One of the book's greatest contributions lies in its careful attention to lines of continuity and discontinuity among regionalized systems of hegemony and oppression. For blacks in the South, the historical legacy of slavery, color-based segregation and 'anti-citizenship' status clearly delineated their status of inferiority in the eyes of both elite and working-class white Americans. On the other hand, the ambiguous status of Mexicans in the Southwest was colored by their narrowly-defined legal status as 'white' but 'foreign' (vis-à-vis the Treaty of Guadalupe), their exploitation as cheap, expendable labor in the local economy, and their troubling but negotiable ancestral linkages with 'colored people (i.e. Indians)' and white Spaniards. In contrast, the oppression of Japanese in Hawaii emerged from their direct threat to haole, or white planters, in a multiracial but stratified labor system, their racially-ascribed identities as pliable labor, and their clear-cut exclusion as 'un-American foreigners.' In all cases, the privileges of whiteness translated differently for women of color – more often to their disadvantage. Although oppression assumed many different faces and could change over time, hierarchies of race and gender were a prevalent aspect of all regional systems of citizenship and labor.

Rather than depicting these groups as passive victims of white oppression, Glenn carefully documents the multiple acts of resistance and political activism that defined minority groups' quest for economic independence and full citizenship. In the process, the author gives credit not only to those who led the forefronts of large-scale resistance struggles, but also, those lesser-known figures who coordinated the day-to-day operations of local political movements, committed individual acts of rebellion in public spaces and the workplace, and sustained the family, home and communities from which these struggles emerged. I particularly appreciated her references to 'cultural citizenship,' which she defines as 'the right to maintain cultures and languages differing from the dominant ones without losing civil or political rights or membership in the national community (p. 54).' In so doing, she

reminds us that 'American citizenship' does not necessarily connote 'assimilation' or 'conformity' and offers a fresh starting point for future studies on citizenship and transnationalism.

Considering its initial interest in the 'double' and 'multiple' jeopardies of race, gender and class, I would also take note of the significance of oppressive experiences among *indigenously* marginalized groups, in the words of Cathy Cohen (Cohen, 1999). That is, Glenn approaches the concept of 'double jeopardy' as one of direct oppression by white society more so than dual oppression by both white society and men of color. For instance, the author points out how the perils of race and gender oppression may play themselves out through unequal wages assigned to black women as compared with black men or through white men's corporal dominance of Mexican women vis-à-vis the asexualization of Mexican men. She also rightfully reminds us that women of color assumed additional burdens as wage earners and homemakers in order to support their family and actively participated in movements of resistance alongside (or behind) their male counterparts. These explicit displays of collective racial solidarity took on special meaning during a time period when racism explicitly, unconditionally and violently set blacks against whites, regardless of class or gender.

However, attention to the dynamics of intersectionality must nevertheless be mindful of the indirect ways in which communities of color may be further divided and repressed. As well documented by contemporary black feminist scholars, the unfortunate consequences of oppression have been the deeper subjugation of women of color within their own racial communities. By exalting the expressions of white male power and simultaneously demasculinizing men of color in every possible way, the only avenue for minority men to 're-claim' masculinity and power have been through the oppressive control of their female counterparts. Although sexism may have roots in other patriarchal cultures, the manifestations of internal oppression intensify under extremely devastating conditions of destitution, segregation and discrimination. It is possible that intra-ethnic oppression may have been superseded by the intensity and violence of racial oppression during that time period, but this would have been a critical point to make in light of the book's goal for an integrated analysis.

It is possible that Glenn's intention was to shed light on both the *independence* and *intersectionality* of race and gender oppression throughout American history, but this aim is not clearly laid out in the first few chapters. At the same time, the reader can have great sympathy for the enormity of the task that Glenn faces and find its sensitivity to multiple issues as one of its most redeeming values. Despite some weaknesses in its conceptual framework, Glenn's monograph offers a refreshing perspective on America's sordid past that avoids the unidimensional storytelling of many historical studies.

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A RESPONSE**EVELYN NAKANO GLENN**

I am grateful for this opportunity to have *Unequal Freedom* read and reviewed by four scholars representing such diverse perspectives. I appreciate their thoughtful engagement with the complexly knotted history that I set forth and their largely positive assessments of the book's contribution. I especially appreciate their comments on certain main themes, such as:

- the comparative regional framework, which allows for detailed analyses of 'on the ground' workings of race and gendered citizenship and labor;
- the distinction between formal citizenship, which is defined by law and policy, and substantive citizenship, which is crucially shaped at the local level by everyday interaction and daily practices that confer or deny membership in the community;
- the spotlight on how excluded communities have actively struggled to gain recognition and rights and in the process have articulated alternative and more expansive notions of freedom and citizenship.

The critiques that the reviewers offer are disparate in scope and direction. Zaragosa Vargas focuses on details in one of the case studies, Mexicans and Anglos in the Southwest. William Robinson argues for a broader world-system approach that focuses on underlying primary

processes that unite race, gender and class. Angie Chung, in contrast, feels that *Unequal Freedom* is too broad and ambitious in scope. Sharmilla Rudrappa wishes that the book made a more explicit argument for the necessity of exclusionary projects to American nation making.

Vargas argues that by emphasizing citizenship, *Unequal Freedom* 'omits [the fact] that Mexican Americans began to embrace whiteness to overcome Jim Crow and the social stigma of being Mexican, a label designating race, not citizenship.' He seems to have overlooked places where I discuss this very issue. For example on pp. 171–2, I talk about Mexican resistance to Anglo attempts to racialize them as non-whites, identifying two kinds of stances Mexicans adopted. Prior to the 1930s, many Mexicans expressed a 'both-and' identity that transcended the binary opposition between white and black. By the late 1930s, observers noted that Mexicans were more likely to claim whiteness within the accepted Anglo framework of white vs. black. In the concluding chapter, I discuss color and class cleavages, citing lighter-skinned New Mexicans referring to themselves as 'Spanish' and wealthy Californios staying aloof from ordinary Mexican Americans while hobnobbing with their own kind and influential Anglos.

The second criticism that Vargas makes is that 'there is no elaboration of the intra-ethnic conflict that characterized relations between Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans.' It is true that I emphasized individual and organizational efforts to forge alliances around common interests of Mexican American and Mexican immigrant workers. However, I also discuss the rise of civic organizations such as La Orden Hijos de America (The Order of the Sons of America) that stressed the American identities of their members and restricted their membership to those who were American citizens. In the concluding chapter (p. 259), I point out that some Mexican organizations chose to fight discrimination by stressing Americanness, thus abandoning the interests of hundreds of thousands of ethnic Mexicans.

Angie Chung gives a detailed and reasonable account of some of the key themes in *Unequal Freedom*. However, she also argues that the book tries to be too comprehensive and ambitious, so that its 'greatest strength turns out to be one of its central weaknesses.' In response, I should note that there have been many reviews of *Unequal Freedom*, and so far, not one reader has indicated any difficulty in following the main threads of argument. As to Chung's example of an omission, namely fluctuations in race relations from local to national levels, this is in fact one of the central issues *Unequal Freedom* addresses. Thus, I examine the changing structures of local and national economies, the shifting political, social and economic relationships among regions, the connections between local and national politics, local elites and national elites, and local customs and ideas and formalized national ideals, among other factors. I trust that most readers understood my elucidation of the regional and national contexts that

shaped race–gender relations in particular periods and the dynamics of change over time.

William Robinson describes *Unequal Freedom* as a ‘tour de force’ and a ‘masterful study.’ I obviously won’t attempt to dissuade him from these assessments! He does, however, raise concerns that I want to address. The first has to do with what he considers a relative under-theorization of class. He relates this to the rise of poststructuralism, which has contributed to reducing race and gender ‘to free floating signifiers.’ While exempting my treatment of race and gender from making such a ‘wrong turn,’ he says that in the case of class, I reduce it to a single institutional site, the labor market and that, moreover, I treat it as categorical, rather than as relational. I absolutely agree that class is relational and that it is not reducible to ‘one’s standing in the labor market.’ It is true that I analyzed the labor market as an important institutional nexus for race and gender stratification, but I also emphasize the overarching class division between those who owned or controlled land and productive property and those who did not. In the cases of the South and Hawaii, land and resources were concentrated in the hands of a small owner/planter class, so that many whites and most people of color were compelled to enter into tenancy arrangements or into wage labor. While white workers held a monopoly on better, cleaner skilled jobs, they were nonetheless working class.

Robinson goes on to say the poststructural approach accords an independent status to race, gender, and class, rather than treating them as dialectically related elements of ‘some underlying [that is more primary] process.’ As evidence of my according independent status to race, gender and class, he quotes me as stating ‘race and gender displaced class as a primary axis of exclusion.’ This quote is taken totally out of context, which was a discussion of white working-class men’s struggle for the franchise in the 19th-century. The movement for ‘universal white manhood suffrage’ succeeded when states passed new suffrage laws removing property requirements for white males while simultaneously adding provisions excluding property-owning white women and black men. My statement was therefore an accurate description of what occurred in this specific historical instance, and was not meant as a generalization. I agree that race, gender, and class are mutually constitutive, but don’t agree that they are reducible to a single primary process.

Sharmilla Rudrappa calls *Unequal Freedom* ‘a crucial intervention on the debates on citizenship,’ particularly by demonstrating the ways in which social movements launched by communities of color have expanded participatory democracy, contributing to labor movements, extending suffrage, and expanding social rights associated with citizenship. She wishes, however, that *Unequal Freedom* had made the case more explicitly that race/gender/class subordination and exclusion were central to processes of nation making and that American democracy was possible only through

imperial projects at home and abroad. In stating her case, Rudrappa makes a very worthwhile distinction between the nation and the state, with the nation defined as ‘a psychological bond that ties people to each other and differentiates them from perceived outsiders.’ She also notes that the period covered in *Unequal Freedom* was crucial in building the modern nation state, which was accomplished through ‘selective incorporation and exclusion of persons through extending citizenship rights and responsibilities.’ I think she is right about this, but that she is focusing on only one part of the story. In *Unequal Freedom*, I define citizenship as ‘membership in the community.’ If we take ‘community’ to refer to psychological bonds that tie people to each other and differentiate them from perceived outsiders, then the statement could be translated to read: ‘membership in the nation.’ Importantly, although I agree that formal membership is indeed regulated by the state, substantive membership – actual recognition and belonging – is ‘regulated’ by ordinary people and their daily practices, often in face-to-face interaction.

Regarding Rudrappa’s overall conclusion is that she wished the book ‘had pushed further to show that unequal freedoms associated with race and the modern American nation have emerged together. Indeed, the modern American nation state could be birthed only through selectively exclusionary projects.’ I agree that the first point would be well worth pursuing. As to the second, *Unequal Freedom* shows that the modern American nation state was certainly birthed through selectively exclusionary projects. However, I would not assert that it had to be that way, that it could only be born through exclusion. I believe that we need to remain alert to historical contingency and specificity and to disjunctures and contradictions in historical processes that have shaped race and gender. Indeed, this belief is the *raison d’être* for the comparative regional approach offered in *Unequal Freedom*. This approach highlights both historical and regional specificity and common threads.

Again, I appreciate the reviewers’ thoughtful criticisms and suggestions as well as their praise. Their varying perspectives suggest fruitful directions for future inquiry.

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