

Race, Class, and Gender in the United States

sixth edition



Paula S. Rothenberg

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An Integrated Study

SIXTH EDITION

Paula S. Rothenberg

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Preface

As did its predecessors, this new edition undertakes the study of issues of race, gender, and sexuality within the context of class. Part I of the book introduces these issues by simultaneously examining the ways in which each has been socially constructed and by examining the social construction of difference or hierarchy itself, which underlies all of them. Part II takes an in-depth look at racism, sexism, heterosexism, and class privilege and introduces the concepts of patriarchy and white privilege. Designed both to focus on the similarities and differences between and among these forms of oppression and to emphasize the ways in which they intersect, the structure of this book continually explores the interlocking nature of these systems as they work in combination, affecting virtually every aspect of life in U.S. society today.

One of the greatest impediments to teaching this material to college-age students is the belief held by some that discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or class is a thing of the past. A surprising number are convinced that unfair treatment, if it ever existed, has largely been eliminated, while another group believes that if unfair treatment exists, it is white people or white men who are currently disadvantaged. Part III of the text, “Discrimination in Everyday Life,” speaks directly to this misconception. Using newspaper accounts of individual and institutional discrimination, all new to this edition, this section makes a compelling case for the continuing existence of unfair and unequal treatment based on people’s race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, or some combination of them. It is guaranteed to produce some lively classroom discussion.

There are new articles in virtually every section of the book, as well as two articles from previous editions that have been reinstated and six articles from the last edition that have been updated by their authors especially for the new edition. New articles include “Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History” by Douglas C. Baynton; a discussion of aversive racism by John F. Dovidio and Samuel L. Gaertner; “Yes, I Follow Islam, but I’m Not a Terrorist,” by Nada El Sawy; and “Masked Racism,” by Angela Davis. Among those revised and updated for this edition are Gregory Mantsios’s piece on class in America; Holly Sklar’s “Imagine a Country”; and the charts and graphs from the National Committee on Pay Equity. This means that, once again, the statistics in this text are as up to date as humanly possible.

New articles and essays consider the ways in which changing U.S. demographics and recent immigration history have complicated both racial and ethnic categories, as well as the relationships between and among groups within those categories. And several readings compare and contrast the successes and failures of various racial and ethnic groups and their causes. By broadening the consideration of issues of ethnicity and race, this edition reflects some of the ways in which this discourse is changing during the first part of the new century. Additional attention is also paid to examining both white-skin privilege and class privilege and making them more visible to readers who are sometimes reluctant to recognize that the flip side of discrimination is privilege.

Throughout the book, issues of gender are framed in inclusive terms to include attention to the socialization of men and boys as well as that of women and girls. Attention is also paid to some of the ways in which male socialization is related to misogyny and homophobia, and a number of articles make clear that male privilege has its price. On the other hand, a number of articles go beyond “victimology,” to present positive accounts of the experiences of individuals and groups as they proudly claim identities that were previously viewed by many as problematic.

Finally, Part VIII, “Making A Difference: Social Activism,” the concluding section of the book, has been substantially revised. It now focuses even more concretely on the ways in which people who care about issues of inequality, privilege, and injustice can and are making a difference. Included are articles that talk very specifically about student activism, including the United Students Against Sweatshops campaign and student involvement in the Taco Bell boycott. I think that faculty who use the book will find that this section allows them to end their courses in a very positive way. This is important, because students who study social problems often end up feeling overwhelmed by the extent and severity of those problems. The new articles in the last section leave students with an understanding that ordinary people acting on their principles really can make a difference.

Organization and Structure

Individual instructors may wish to modify the order of presentation of readings to conform to their own vision of how this complex and challenging material is best presented. The articles included in the sixth edition provide considerable flexibility in this respect. For example, the Gregory Mantsios article on class that appears in Part II could easily be used early in Part IV to frame the discussion of the economics of race, class, and gender in the United States. The piece by Evelyn Alsultany, “Los Intersticios,” in Part V might well be used in conjunction with essays in Parts I and II to illustrate the ways in which identity is constructed and contextualized. Douglas Baynton’s essay, “Disability and the Justification of Inequality in American History,” can be combined with selections 79 and 80 to provide a mini-unit on disability issues. Articles that focus on male socialization and men’s experience might be grouped together for a special section on the social construc-

tion of masculinity. These include the Michael Kimmel essay in Part I, the Allan Johnson piece in Part II, “The Loneliest Athletes” in Part III, and the Don Sabo, Tommi Aviccoli, Libby Copeland, June Jordan, and Kate Bornstein pieces in Part V, as well as “White Lies” and “Pulling Train” in Part VII and the Michael Bronski piece in Part VIII.

I continue to place the historical materials in Part VI, fairly late in the book, because I continue to believe that students are more likely to read and digest this material after their interest has been captured by the more contemporary readings. To my mind, this ordering helps students see that history holds answers to perplexing contemporary questions rather than simply providing background for them. Other instructors will undoubtedly prefer to use the historical material earlier. Countless other reorderings will emerge from the contents, depending on each instructor’s own vision for the course being taught. I think this flexibility is one of the strong points of a collection that is genuinely interdisciplinary and inclusive.

In this new edition I have tried to continue to enlarge the scope of vision and deepen the analysis that prompted the book in the first place. I have been helped by conversations with faculty and students throughout the country who have shared their experiences in using the text with me. The fact that so many have found the book useful confirms my own belief that these topics are an essential part of a liberal education today. To me, it is unthinkable that students graduating from college in the twenty-first century would fail to grapple with issues of diversity, difference, and inequality in the course of their studies. This book is intended to facilitate that process. To that end, I welcome suggestions and comments from students and faculty and others who use the text. I can be reached at rothenbergp@wpunj.edu.

Acknowledgments

Many people contributed to this book. First, I owe a profound debt to the old 12th Street study group, with whom I first studied black history and first came to understand the centrality of the issue of race. I am also indebted to the group’s members, who provided me with a lasting example of what it means to commit one’s life to the struggle for justice for all people.

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Paula S. Rothenberg

About the Author

Paula S. Rothenberg is Director of the New Jersey Project on Inclusive Scholarship, Curriculum, and Teaching and a professor at the William Paterson University of New Jersey. She attended the University of Chicago and received her undergraduate degree from New York University, where she also did her graduate work. Rothenberg has lectured and consulted on multicultural and gender issues and curriculum transformation at hundreds of colleges and universities throughout the country. Her articles and essays appear in journals and anthologies across the disciplines, and many have been widely reprinted. Rothenberg is editor of *White Privilege: Essential Readings on the Other Side of Racism* (Worth, 2002); co-editor of *Creating an Inclusive College Curriculum: A Teaching Sourcebook from the New Jersey Project* (Teachers College Press, 1996); as well as co-editor of several highly successful college text anthologies, including *Feminist Frameworks* (McGraw-Hill, 1978, 1984, 1993). Her political memoir, *Invisible Privilege: A Memoir About Race, Class, and Gender*, was published by the University Press of Kansas in 2000.

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