
Review

Reviewed Work(s): *The Homeland Is the Arena: Religion, Transnationalism, and the Integration of Senegalese Immigrants in America* by Ousmane Oumar Kane

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are more multicultural. In the case of Sugarland and Bellevue, there has been significant support and gain from being near major Asian American metropolises that exemplify strong community-based organizations, strong and experienced ethnic leaders, and strong ideology to lead community politics. This proximity fuels hope of following in the steps of a guiding political mentor.

Asian American communities exist in many different states of political incorporation. Some are transformed, while others are simply emerging. Still others, like Daly City, California, are “delayed.” Despite the critical mass, the community lacks the necessary political loci to effectively mobilize the masses. Community-based organizations are not to be underestimated or underappreciated in the quest for political incorporation. Eau Claire, Wisconsin also provides evidence on this point. The Hmong community in Eau Claire has achieved unprecedented gains. Despite having significant but not massive numbers, the Hmong have capitalized on their strong community-based organizations to parlay their candidates into local office. The Hmong have made similar inroads in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, where they have forged important ties with other Asian American ethnic groups.

Lai is the first to highlight the importance of the interplay of Asian American candidates, ethnic community-based organizations, and the emerging and influential ethnic media. He is also the first to study in depth the suburban transformation and its role in Asian American politics. He brings a new theoretical perspective to the study of Asian American politics, and indeed, to minority politics in general. This is an important book, and one that scholars of minority politics will continue to reference for its depth of insight into the mechanisms of political incorporation.

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The Homeland Is the Arena: Religion, Transnationalism, and the Integration of Senegalese Immigrants in America by *Ousmane Oumar Kane*. New York, Oxford University Press, 2011. 366 pp. \$35.00.

Transnational population movements are integral to globalization. Since the passage of the 1965 Immigration Act, in the United States, Africans have become a growing part of these migrations. Senegalese immigrants, many of whom were in earlier transnational trading networks in Africa, as well as students, workers, and clergy in France, flowed to the United States as part of a new African presence throughout the country. The title is apposite, given its expression of socially grounded commentary on the immigrant condition and the continued resonance of the homeland in the minds, imaginations, and calculations of immigrants. The book is a comprehensive study of Senegalese transnational communities in the New York metropolitan area. Ousmane Oumar Kane effectively addresses the subject matter and offers a window into

the lives of the communities, presenting the challenges, opportunities, institutions, and adjustments that Senegalese immigrants have made to meet their transnational obligations.

Islam looms large in the book, as the dominant religion of the Senegalese, and Kane presents the richness of its diversity in rituals, worship, and everyday life, showing how religion has transformed transnational community building and integration. Each chapter offers a window into the rich interactions sharply drawn from narratives of the everyday lives of Senegalese immigrants. In an admixture of the sacred and secular, Kane offers a rich, well-researched rendition of the social, economic, and political relations that re-create the story of immigrants as well as produce unique institutions that inscribe new discourses in contemporary American and Senegalese societies.

The argument on whether culture can be preserved anywhere in the world is important, and Kane engages the subject appropriately when he argues that immigrants are selective about what they choose to pack and unpack in the figurative trunks they bring to America. The chapter on gender and generation provides valuable insight into the anxieties and pressures that are integral to negotiating transnationalism. Associational relations and their institutional consequences, and contributions to commercial and economic growth, including the impact of remittances; relations of power within families and communities; what Kane dubs the “transnational spiritual economy”; and the desperation driving population movements from a continent embroiled in over three decades of economic crises, are well contextualized and skillfully analyzed.

Despite these important contributions, the book has some minor gaps, especially along the lines of sweeping generalizations that obscure the varied nature of Islam in Senegal and in Africa. I will list only a few obvious cases. It is problematic when Kane switches from Senegal as the unit of analysis to Africa, especially when drawing parallels with other African countries. This generalization is glaring in a reference to African Muslim women’s head-covering practices when the author conflates the Senegalese case with the variety of head-covering conventions in Africa. Similarly, the author’s reference to “two decades” of polemics among Nigerian Muslims ignores the long tradition of vigorous Islamic clerical debates in what eventually became Northern Nigeria. Polemics and debates are a long-term historical phenomenon documented since the foundational period of Islam, and for Nigeria (among other instances), since the early nineteenth-century jihad led by Usman dan Fodio, culminating in the establishment of the Sokoto Caliphate. One also wonders about the book’s statement on the intent of the 1965 Immigration Act (p. 5). The assessment on Paul Stoller’s *Money Has no Smell...* (pp. 76–77) as implying that even immoral money-generating activities are pursued in a blanket fashion is problematic. Rather, Stoller’s argument is more about the dignity of labor, and the Hobson’s choice that forces African Muslim immigrants’ engagement in measures that deviate from homeland and religious norms to ensure financial survival and possible autonomy. As well, the

contention that the appeal to Afrocentricity is primary to the foregrounding of Cheikh Ahmadu Bamba's beliefs and teaching on Africans' equality to other peoples, as well as Cheikh Anta Diop being chosen over other black scholars is questionable, being asserted rather than proven.

Altogether, the book represents a major, seminal contribution to transnational, religious, and African Studies.

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Making Volunteers: Civic Life after Welfare's End by *Nina Eliasoph*.
Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2011. 336 pp. \$39.50.

In her field work on youth programs, Nina Eliasoph discovered a fascinating organizational form, "Empowerment Projects." Such organizations aim to empower their participants and communities through open, inclusive, egalitarian participation that is also inspiring, leadership-building, innovative, multicultural, grass roots, comfortable, and personalized. As Eliasoph's account elucidates, many of the goals of Empowerment Projects are fundamentally contradictory. For example, through the promotion of "diversity," participants are urged to "break out of their boxes" and "stretch their comfort zones," and yet their experience is supposed to remain comfortable. Another feature of Empowerment Projects is that they rely on "short-term, flexible funding from a 'hybrid' of private, public, and/or nonprofit sources" (p. x). The short-term, uncertain funding and the necessity of constantly proposing innovative programming, rather than seeking funding based on needs, also prevented the organizations Eliasoph studied from realizing their full potential. Furthermore, the contradictory aims and funding structure led to an absence of reflection on the sources of the social problems these organizations existed to mitigate.

Among the contributions that are particularly striking is Eliasoph's analysis of consequences of "plug-in" volunteers, volunteers with limited time to spare who lacked training and often lacked relevant skills. As she states, "In an Empowerment Project, relationships between volunteers and needy youth are supposed to feel intimate and secure, yet also flexible, temporary, and optional" (p. 145). Not surprisingly, close and rewarding relationships did not flourish under these conditions. In fact, the use of plug-in volunteers undermined the intimacy of the program. Volunteers gravitated toward the children who were easy to help instead of the children whose needs were greater. Further, this style of after-school tutoring is harmful when children are given conflicting advice, which Eliasoph frequently observed.

Eliasoph contrasts plug-in volunteers with two groups of more-constructive volunteers: those who worked on the board of directors and did not expect to make an emotional connection, and upper-class female volunteers of the 1900s