

Preface

The first two decades of the new millennium have been saturated with debate concerning fundamental ideals and principles by which people live worldwide. Large migrations of populations, due to shifts in economic opportunities, natural disasters, and especially war, have put into sharp relief the need for reassessing who we are and where we are headed as a society. As a nation are we best able to care for ourselves by following more of an isolationist set of policies, both abroad and domestic? These new positions feature “America First” slogans, followed by conversations and a reversal of laws making decisions as to who is American, who is not, and who is marginalized. The seventh edition of *Experiencing Race, Class, and Gender in the United States* offers an opportunity to look at many of these issues as experienced by the diverse population of this country and of the world. This is also the best way to learn about ourselves. Collecting details of the “American experience” is an ongoing effort that requires each of us to keep our eye on the shifts and different reflections of this richly varied and complex society. Learning more about the past and present through many voices will help us all problem solve with balance and wisdom as valuable, participating members of this country and of the world.

Experiencing Race, Class, and Gender in the United States, seventh edition, introduces students to basic concepts of multiculturalism and to seminal debates taken up by social scientists, physical scientists, and political commentators. Some points, however, can be made only by the poets and literary writers included herein. This text encourages readers to examine their own lives by challenging notions of hierarchy and stereotypes that often seem so natural and largely go unchallenged. Such a journey is transforming and lengthy and is part of an ongoing American

experience. *Experiencing Race, Class, and Gender* is a guide for students in thoughtful exploration of issues that surround personal and institutionalized bigotry. It encourages informed debate and avoids being doctrinaire, for learning to think through these issues is a far greater commitment than carefully agreeing with the professor.

Organization of the Book

This book is divided into three main divisions: Identity (Parts I–III), Power (Parts IV–VII), and Change (Parts VIII–IX). The first division, Identity, guides the reader to examine his or her own life and those of others by exploring the many layers that make up our selves and how those layers are affected by the lived experience of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic class.

The text then shifts its focus to a wider context in the second division, Power, in order to examine how our lives are shaped by specific social powers. Understanding one's social skin includes an acknowledgment of how we are all tied to institutions, groups, ongoing conflicts, and supportive networks. Exploring the differing circumstances and seeing patterns that reflect groups' varying experiences within our society gives us a better intellectual grip on inequalities that persist or emerge in the United States, often made clearer after natural and man-made disasters.

As some of us have become used to the idea that only governmental institutions or business conglomerates can change social policies and broad economic circumstances, the acknowledgment of inequities and human rights abuses leaves many feeling powerless, angry,

and concluding “there will always be poverty (or racism, sexism, etc.), so I just have to take care of myself.” The third division of this text, *Change*, guides students to the knowledge that they can indeed effect change. Part VIII, *Taking Action*, introduces students to the stages of identifying a problem, visualizing the needed change, and going forward with a collective plan of action while armed with the knowledge of how to handle resistance. Part IX, *Change Makers*, brings the reader into the experiences of ordinary people who have changed many lives by refusing to give up their human rights and those of their community.

The introductions to the text’s three main divisions and nine parts are intended to situate the concepts of the readings in a particular context, but students and instructors are encouraged to challenge the editor’s and authors’ assumptions. Some theoretical terms are highlighted by boldface type, and term definitions follow some of the readings. Each reading is followed by a set of “Understanding the Reading” questions to aid in critical thinking and classroom discussion and by “Suggestions for Responding,” which encourages further study for those who are interested.

New to the Seventh Edition

The seventh edition has twenty-five new readings. As with the last edition, the text remains a combination of social science and the humanities, drawing on the strengths of a multidisciplinary approach that hopefully will add to the flexibility of the collection’s use and provide broader exposure to knowledge as we grapple with these most basic questions in our society. Other new readings focus upon divisions in our understanding of U.S. history and the consequences. In verse a young Asian-American woman rejects the words and behavior of those who feel entitled

to assign her to specific sexual stereotypes. Focusing on the Cuban communities of Florida, we learn of their different legal and cultural statuses, and how they identify as Americans. In Part II, Gender and Sexual Identity, an Olympic medalist discusses his experiences of coming out. The next essay asks “Why are White Men stockpiling guns?” In Part III, Economics and the American Dream, a new essay focuses on being homeless in America. In the Power and Racism section, an essay analyzes why the 1915 silent film ‘Birth of a Nation’ still matters in American politics, and another discusses governmental reactions to recent immigration raids. The essay ‘The Year in Hate’ analyzes Trump’s encouragement of white supremacist groups and the ensuing backlash. Directly following is an article on white privilege. The essay by Renee Graham examines white fear as an American problem. In the Power and Sexism section the gender gains and gaps in the U.S. are discussed as well as sexual harassment at work, and gender bias in the construction industry. Also we focus upon the present-day status of Roe v. Wade, now that this landmark decision supporting women's right to choose is forty-five years old. The Power and Classism section has added a recent report on public support for ‘assistance to the poor’ and its resistance to ‘welfare’. The final essay in this section discusses the tainted water in upstate New York as an environmental and political crisis that persists. Part VII is new to the edition, entitled “Race, Class, and Gender During the Obama and Trump Administrations: A Comparative Look”. These new essays deal with changes in human rights policies, behavior, and laws from 2010-2018, which includes two terms of the Obama presidency and the two years of Trump’s presidency. Some of the themes are: racial politics, women’s rights, environmental justice, and marginalization. Part VIII “Taking Action” highlights specific powerful but peaceful reactions to long-standing societal problems in the U.S., including: “Five Ways to Help Prevent Domestic Violence” and “The Oklahoma Teachers’ Strike”. Part IX, Change Makers, includes a

new essay by Linda Barstyn titled “The Weinstein Effect”. It asks if we have been truly a leader in gender equality, given the recent seismic behavior, policy, and power shifts in the work world, once women and minors’ voices were heard. The other essay asks if we have been truly a leader in gender equality, given the recent seismic behavior, policy, and power shifts in the work world, once women and minors’ voices were heard.