



A place we call home: Gender, race, and justice in Syracuse

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To cite this article: Andrew Foell (2017) A place we call home: Gender, race, and justice in Syracuse, *Community Development*, 48:1, 155-157, DOI: [10.1080/15575330.2016.1230306](https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2016.1230306)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2016.1230306>



Published online: 09 Sep 2016.



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The reader may begin to feel that the author romanticizes the British identity, to the extent that you think to be British is to have a flawless, virtuous character. But you gradually realize that the author is constructing a model that combines tolerance, acceptance, respect, and fairness that does not stand for a specific group of people but for the spirit of a nation. The author's patriotic treatise and his pursuit of raising awareness of a collective identity possibly came in the shadow of Scotland's intention to separate from the United Kingdom at the time this book was written. In the meanwhile, however, the recent voting in Britain to leave the European Union (Brexit) is already starting to have a complicated set of social, economic, and political consequences not only within the United Kingdom itself but also across the European nations and the entire world.

One also senses that the author over-emphasized the masculine identity that characterizes the British spirit, at the expense of feminist contribution to culture and society. Another observation is related to concentration on elite figures of politicians, clergymen, and the upper class with relatively scant attention to non-elites. Nonetheless, the author furnishes the reader with powerful insights of philosophers, thinkers, poets, and novelists who echo the essence of British collective identity.

Although the book might be filed under the categories of diversity and community relations, which are highly significant disciplines in today's world, it could also be regarded as a reference to help readers understand major historic events that shaped the United Kingdom as a nation and formulated the British identity. The key concepts addressed in the book match the core components of community development, such as solidarity, collective identity, and common causes.

The author saves a considerable slice of the book to talk about the importance of multiculturalism and embracing other identities, mainly Muslims and Asians. He contends that immigrants have a sense of attachment and appreciation of the soul of British citizenry, arguing that Muslims are a valuable asset to the society because their tenets match that of British principles. The writer has that feeling of concern and unspoken fear of disintegration and national fragmentation of the United Kingdom. To encounter separatists' leanings, he expands and reintroduces the meaning of British identity to accommodate and melt down all sub-identities within the UK's pot.

What makes the book worthy of reading is that the author gives voice to many diverse voices to shape the argument and message. He sums up by introducing a set of practical proposals that suggest upgrading the symbolic and cultural aspects of the nation, including redesigning the flag, refocusing on the monarchy, reviving the role of the church, and narrowing the gap between the state and religion.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2016.1230301>

A place we call home: Gender, race, and justice in Syracuse, by K. Animashaun Ducre, Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 2012, 160 pp., US\$24.95 (hardcover), ISBN 9780815633068

In *A Place We Call Home: Gender, Race, and Justice in Syracuse*, K. Animashaun Ducre adds to the current literature on Black feminist epistemology by combining *community mapping* and *Photovoice* methodologies. Ducre uses the voices of 15 Black mothers, including herself, to highlight the strengths of individuals to overcome obstacles in racialized and oppressive spaces. Ducre attempts to sever the dichotomous approach of early environmental justice researchers concerned with

which socioeconomic variables are more detrimental than others in terms of environmental injustice, and refutes reductionist tendencies in social science research. Instead, Ducre seeks to understand the complexity and multidimensionality of oppression. It is in looking at the women's multiple social identities together, rather than compartmentalizing social identities and essentializing the experiences of poor Black women, that the book finds its niche.

Ducre delineates the evolution of African-American spatiality, the construction of racialized space, the impacts of environmental racism, and the power of personal agency through place making in degraded environments. Ducre then explores the historical contexts of such topics nationally and locally, and also gives the reader a summary of environmental justice research, offering an insightful interpretation of the term that expands beyond the confines of environmentalism. The purpose of the book was to bridge Black feminist theory and environmental justice scholarship by documenting the lived experiences of African-American mothers, with particular attention placed on poor, working class Black mothers residing in the South Side neighborhood of Syracuse, New York. To do this, Ducre employs the community engagement strategies of community mapping and Photovoice to examine structural obstacles in areas of environmental neglect.

The Introduction and Chapter 1 acquaint the reader with the scope of the project, the participants, and the author, weaving in details about life in Syracuse during the summer leading up to the project's outset. Chapter 2 chronicles three major periods of Black disruption and relocation in Syracuse, from 1935 through 2005, presumably continuing through the present day. This history details the roles that practices such as covenant restrictions, redlining, urban renewal, and environmental injustice have played in the geographic and social stratification of the South Side.

Chapter 3 details the Community Mapping Project and provides personal narratives of the mothers' experiences supplemented with Black feminist theory. Ducre offers an interpretation of space and place making through the female experience, and emphasizes the contested nature of the Syracuse mothers' experiences as both life giving and fatalistic. For example, Ducre highlights the experience of one mother who holds fond memories and emotional attachment to her neighborhood, while at the same time attempting to raise and protect her children in a harsh environment. The allusions to gang violence and drugs are normalized among the mothers and are seen as inevitable aspects of life in the South Side.

Chapter 4 outlines the Health Photovoice Project and makes a case for the technique within Black feminist methodology by emphasizing its manifestation of empowerment education, its ability to create a safe, supportive environment for dialogue, and its capacity to evenly distribute power between the researcher and the researched. The characteristics of Photovoice reinforce Ducre's suppositions by aligning the methodology to core tenants of Black feminism. Ducre validates her project results by analyzing her work with Black mothers in Syracuse and McIntyre's (2003) work with women in Belfast, Ireland, providing the reader with a pensive case study. Ducre concludes by giving a synopsis of the project's implications, the pitfalls of the project, and the author's personal journey with the mothers in Syracuse.

Ducre's unflinching and persistent use of personal narrative, complemented by theoretical interpretations, is empowering and approachable, adding depth to the research. For example, the author allows the mothers' voices to shine, while referencing and making comparisons to similar projects around the world. In doing so, Ducre offers readers a glimpse at two innovative community engagement strategies that should resonate with individuals in a variety of fields.

The book could be strengthened by more appealing visuals. The black and white photocopied images are acceptable, but do not fully convey the expressive nature of the methodology. The maps are small and hard to read, and offer little value to the reader that cannot be found in the text. Because the book is manageable in length, enhanced images would have provided stimulating supplements. The author could have added further value by differentiating the selected methodology from comparable research methods. The author successfully explains the rationale

behind the use of community mapping and Photovoice, but fails to distinguish these methods from other participatory engagement strategies.

The greatest contribution of Ducre's work is bringing the voices of poor, working class Black mothers to the forefront of analyses, and examining their oppression through the intersectionality of the multiple social identities the women occupy, including race, class, gender, and geography. By allowing the Black mothers to interpret their space through mapping and photography, Ducre successfully examines the mothers' lived experiences while allowing the voices of a demographic that is either "invisible or hypervisible" to be heard (p. 45). The collective voice presented by Ducre reminds those interested in community development work that (re)development is not synonymous with social transformation, and that sharing experiences can empower and unite those who are unseen and unheard. Thus, it is the collection of voices presented in *A Place We Call Home* that provides valuable insights for students, academics, and practitioners.

Reference

Mcintyre, A. (2003). Through the eyes of women: Photovoice and participatory research as tools for reimagining place. *Gender, Place, and Culture*, 10, 47–66.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15575330.2016.1230306>

Emerald cities: Urban sustainability and economic development, by Joan Fitzgerald, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010, 242 pp., US\$29.95 (hardback), ISBN 9780195382761

Joan Fitzgerald connects two historically divergent concepts – sustainability and economic development – in her timely book, *Emerald Cities: Urban Sustainability and Economic Development*. The main impetus for her work is to demonstrate examples of US cities that have transitioned from traditional forms of economic development into those embracing sustainability. Now more than ever are such examples crucial to consider and follow as cities wrestle with concepts of environmental/social justice as they do their part to create jobs and revive struggling economies.

In addition to describing ideal case cities such as Austin, Boston, Portland, and Seattle and how the cities and businesses have pursued sustainable economic development, Fitzgerald structures the text around three additional points. First, opportunities for sectoral economic development are explored in the way of renewable energy, energy efficiency, green building, waste management, and transportation. To understand how cities might create/expand their green economic sector, Fitzgerald identifies three main strategies: linking, transformational, and leapfrogging. Finally, the author describes activities that practitioners from ideal case cities have employed "to attract business growth or maintain and build on existing strengths" (p. 17) in developing a new economic sector focused on sustainability.

This work makes numerous contributions to the existing literature concerning sustainability and development and has various implications for practitioners. With the well-documented criticisms of President Obama's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, this work showcases success stories of economic development as many cities "turn the corner" and begin to reap the benefits of sustainable development that will have lasting implications. This work acknowledges