

# BOOK REVIEWS

## **COLLISIONS AT THE CROSSROADS: HOW PLACE AND MOBILITY MAKE RACE**

By Genevieve Carpio.

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Reviewed by Natalia Molina.

## **GRAND ARMY OF LABOR: WORKERS, VETERANS, AND THE MEANING OF THE CIVIL WAR**

By Matthew E. Stanley.

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Reviewed by Justin Rogers-Cooper.

Editorial note: Book reviews are lightly edited for clarity and typographical errors.

**COLLISIONS AT THE CROSSROADS: HOW PLACE AND MOBILITY MAKE RACE.**  
**By Genevieve Carpio. Oakland: University of California Press, 2019.**

For over forty years in ethnic studies, we scholars have examined “race-making” practices in sustained scholarly ways. We have examined the role of structural forces (e.g. laws, policies), as well as cultural narratives (e.g. media, representations) across fields. We have learned much and yet Carpio has managed to show us a new way of seeing by bringing Mobility Studies into the conversation on how race is made. Mobility as a race-making concept is so powerful that once you see it, you cannot un-see it. In her book, *Collisions at the Crossroads: How Place and Mobility Make Race*, Carpio examines the history of California’s Inland Empire across the span of the twentieth century, beginning with the rise of the citrus industry. In this work, she demonstrates how “mobility has been an active force in racialization over the twentieth century, one that has operated alongside ‘place’ to shape regional memory and belonging in multiracial communities” (5). Her strongly argued thesis is firmly supported by close examinations of the everyday movement of racialized immigrant communities. At times, she contrasts the experience of these racialized communities with that of dominant white communities, which enjoyed a right to mobility, as well as settlement, often denied to racialized communities. Carpio conducted research in over thirty archives to put these shards of evidence into conversation with one another and construct this history.

What is so fascinating about Carpio’s work is the way she elucidates how mobility, and the lack of it, can serve to depict groups as entitled or as unworthy—and then how these scripts might flip depending on what was at stake. As the citrus industry developed in the nineteenth century, for example, Mexicans living in the new state of California were dispossessed of their land under the California Land Act of 1851. Under the Homestead Act of 1860, this land was redistributed to whites who were depicted as more worthy of settling on the land, making them better candidates for land development. Indigenous peoples, who were considered nomadic, were not even considered as possible land owners, though of course it was their land to begin with. Similarly, Japanese were not allowed to settle long-term in the first half of the twentieth century. Japanese were depicted as so undesirable that under the Alien Land Law Acts beginning in California in 1913 they were not allowed to own land or lease it for more than three years, a law that stayed on the books until it was overturned in 1952. As such, we see how settlement, in contrast to mobility, was an important tool for maintaining a racial hierarchy in the region and securing racial capitalism for whites only.

A relational understanding of race is central to Carpio's argument about how mobility can shape ideas about race differently. In the previous example, we can see how one group's acquisition of resources (land for settled whites, not for supposedly nomadic or itinerant others) is made possible by those resources being stripped away from others. This is more than comparing and contrasting one group to another: her work is central in showing how the freedoms and privileges of one group actively depend on those privileges being denied to others. Overall, *Collisions at the Crossroads* provides groundbreaking insights into how mobility allowed some groups to become insiders and how the lack of it forced other groups to become outsiders, occupying different places in the regional racial hierarchy. This is a strongly original and insightful work.

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