

purposes. Even more intriguing is Weatherford's discussion of Native American peacekeeping activities and his challenge to Euro-Americans to learn these lessons.

This book marshalls abundant evidence documenting the facts that American Indians were not the "savages" perceived by early Europeans, were not without sophisticated cultural systems, and were not wandering around purposelessly waiting to be started on a path to "progress" facilitated by a doctrine of Manifest Destiny. Weatherford's discussion of the roles of American Indian men and women in hunting and processing fur-bearing animals is insightful vis-à-vis the economic development of the American frontier and international trade systems as well. He lists the many crops first domesticated in the Americas and points out that these crops constitute one-third of the annual harvest in the United States. Among the many other contributions of American Indians are items of hunting equipment and clothing, art objects, the Navajo code-talkers in World War II, a myriad of place names and frequently used words, and the intellectual achievements of people such as Ely Parker, George Hunt, and Ella Deloria.

The continuity and vitality of Native cultural traditions is also placed in a provocative perspective. In speaking of long-standing Native American fishing traditions along the Northwest coast, for example, Weatherford comments, "They do not fish today with the same tools they used a century ago, any more than today's farmer would walk behind a plow pulled by a mule." His description of the honoring of military veterans and the American flag at the powwow in Mankato, Minnesota, is equally thoughtful.

As those who have taught anthropology, history, American Indian and ethnic studies will note, a good deal of the subject matter in *Native Roots* is covered in the film *More Than Bows and Arrows* and is available in other sources—for example, textbooks and articles by Harold Driver, Jesse Jennings, Gordon Willey, A. Irving Hallowell, and Gerard Reed. Weatherford's book is written in an engaging and yet instructive fashion. In that respect, it is not only a welcome addition for the academic audience, but will also appeal to a much wider lay public which is struggling to understand the meanings of the depths and diversity of the American experience.

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**Vernon J. Williams. *From a Caste to a Minority: Changing Attitudes of American Sociologists towards Afro-Americans.* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1989) 202 pp., \$39.95 cloth.**

Attitudes towards specific racial minorities have been central to the history of the United States. These attitudes have influenced the development of social and cultural institutions, they have determined the structure of our communities, and they have affected our laws and our politics. Given the centrality of race in American culture, it is surprising that until the second half of the twentieth

century there was little effort to examine systematically the role of race in US history, or to examine changing attitudes towards race; and the efforts that were made rarely made it into the mainstream of American historiography.

Vernon J. Williams's study of the evolution of the attitudes of American sociologists towards blacks is one of a number of books written during the last two decades that explores racial attitudes in the United States. What is unique about Williams's efforts is that he focuses on the changing racial attitudes of one profession, sociology, during the years from 1896 until the end of World War II. Williams specifically attempts to explain "how and why" sociology transformed itself "from a discipline that rationalized caste-like arrangements in the United States to one that actively advocated and supported the full assimilation of Afro-Americans into the American mainstream." Williams argues that by the end of World War II sociologists had embraced an assimilationist theory of race relations that combined the ideals of assimilation and the concept of black progress, and which had been one of several streams of racial thought in sociology since the late nineteenth century. In doing so, they "transformed their discipline into one of the most forward looking of all social science departments."

Williams bases his arguments on a detailed analysis of the published writings of American sociologists from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. While he groups sociologists into those who supported the concepts of assimilation, black progress, and racial equality, and those who accepted theories of black inferiority, his analysis is not simplistic. He carefully details the various arguments of supporters and opponents of racial equality, examines the arguments of black and white, northern and southern, and professional and amateur sociologists. Williams recognizes that theories of race and the understanding of race were often complex. For example, W. E. B. DuBois, who in the first decade of the twentieth century was the major critic of segregation and one of the pioneers in the development of scientific analysis of race, also slipped occasionally into the assumptions of black racial inferiority that were so dominant at his time. Williams also describes the efforts of psychologists and anthropologists to use intelligence tests and other empirical measures to categorize the races, and uses these efforts to demonstrate that the mere triumph of the "scientific analysis of race" did not guarantee the triumph of theories of racial progress and assimilation. Finally, Williams argues that the ultimate triumph of assimilationist theory resulted from the more powerful and effective research and arguments of the advocates of racial equality, which by 1945 wore down the opponents of black inferiority.

Throughout his study Williams focuses on the key figures, from Lester Ward to Franz Boas to E. Franklin Frazier, who were key to the emergence of assimilationist theory. Perhaps the symbol that reflected the triumph of liberal racial theory in American sociology was the election of black sociologist, E. Franklin Frazier, as president of the American Sociological Society in 1946.

As interesting as it is, Williams's study is not without weaknesses. Most troubling is his decision to restrict this study to published essays—and to focus on essays published in the *American Journal of Sociology*. While this certainly simplified the research necessary to complete this study, it raises questions about

the degree to which this study addresses the full extent of the debate over race in the profession. The time boundaries placed on this study are another problem. Williams never indicates why he begins his examination in 1896, or why he ends it in 1945. Logical events to mark the beginning of a study on racial attitudes might be Booker T. Washington's Atlanta speech, or, perhaps, the founding of the *American Journal of Sociology*--both of which occurred in 1895. Likewise, logical dates to end the study might be the publication of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* in 1944, or the election of Frazier as president of the American Sociological Society in 1946. The lack of a clearly defined beginning or end to this study reflects the more general problem that Williams has with the organization of this study.

In spite of these flaws, *From a Caste to a Minority* is a valuable book which adds to our knowledge on the formulation of attitudes about blacks in the United States. Furthermore, together with Stow Person's *Ethnic Studies at Chicago, 1905-45*, it provides an intriguing analysis of racial thought in one of the important disciplines of the social sciences.

— Cary D. Wintz  
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**Shay Youngblood. *The Big Mama Stories*. (Ithaca, NY: Firebrand Books, 1989) 106 pp., \$8.95 paper.**

A story ain't something you just read off like ingredients on a soap box. A story's like a map—you follow the lines and they'll take you somewhere. There's a way to do anything, and with a story you can take your time.

Shay Youngblood learns how to tell stories from her many Big Mamas. The tales answer questions about her biological mother who is dead, what it means to be a woman, and how it feels to be black in Princeton, Georgia, prior to the civil rights movement. The voices of Big Mama, Miss Emma Lou, Aunt Mae and others leap off the page, and take readers on a journey into homes, on porches, and down the river fishing. Each story is a piece of a puzzle that adds to form a complete picture of the protagonist.

Written in black English, the twelve stories in this volume are portraits of the many women and the few men who teach the young protagonist (who remains nameless) lessons about life. From these tales the narrator/protagonist comes to know not only her personal history, but the larger history of the black community. The optimistic mood and upbeat style of this collection is similar to Toni Cade Bambara's *Gorilla My Love* (1981), in which the narrators are mostly street-smart, hip-talking young women determined to make a place for themselves. While Youngblood's women are middle-aged, they demonstrate spunk, humor, and wisdom.

Youngblood is intimate with the characters, yet her portrayal is not romantic.