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Review
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The essays in *African Immigrant Religions in America* are based on reliable research; however, it is actually a volume on African Christian immigrants that includes two essays on Muslim immigrants. There are some redundancies as contributors trip over each other in presenting the same data on these churches. Given the long and well-documented history of Muslims in America, it is somewhat disconcerting that the discussion of this topic ends with the 1960s.

These scholars ask: Why have African immigrant churches been left out of the study of black religion in the United States? Well, forty years is a relatively short time for history to include these stories. One might ask: How long did it take for the descendants of enslaved Africans and African Americans to write the history of their religious institutions, or the black church in general?

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Karyn R. Lacy, *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007. Pp. 302. Cloth $55.00. Paper $21.95.

Sociologist Karyn R. Lacy's *Blue-Chip Black: Race, Class, and Status in the New Black Middle Class* offers a much-needed analysis of the contemporary black middle class. Sociologists have focused much of their attention on the vulnerabilities of the black lower middle class in urban neighborhoods. Since African Americans have become more affluent and gained access to wider housing options, Lacy has shifted the scholarly lens from the urban class structure to the suburbs. Lacy compares black middle-class life in three distinct suburban neighborhoods in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area: Lakeview, a majority white middle-class suburb in Fairfax County, Virginia; Riverton, a predominantly black middle-class suburb in Prince George's County, Maryland; and Sherwood Park, a majority black upper-middle-class subdivision in Riverton. Lacy's "core" black middle class earn between $50,000 and $100,000 annually and the upper-middle class earn more than $100,000 a year. Education, occupation, wealth, and the use of a black middle-class "tool kit" are also central to her definition of "middle class." By focusing on the suburban setting and a less economically vulnerable segment of the black middle class, Lacy departs from previous studies such as Mary Pattillo's *Black Picket Fences: Privilege and Peril Among the Black Middle Class* (1999) to further complicate our understanding of race, class, and place.

Lacy utilizes in-depth interviews and participant observations to study the ways in which these middle- and upper-middle class African Americans draw on multiple identities to navigate, and teach their children to navigate, their

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suburban landscape. She argues that African Americans in these three suburban communities draw on a "tool kit" of five distinct social identities—race, class, status, public, and suburban—but residential location determines "how and under what circumstances groups of middle-class blacks construct and assert these identities." In the introduction and chapter one, Lacy impressively situates her study in the sociological literature and theories. I was convinced from the outset that her study was different from others on the black middle class, but she unnecessarily and distractingly mentions over and over again how her analysis diverges from earlier works.

The core chapters focus on each of the five identities that encompass the middle-class tool kit. According to Lacy, these participants strategically employed individual "cultural capital," such as wearing professional clothing to go shopping or house hunting to create public identities aimed at reducing the likelihood that racial discrimination would determine their life choices. Improvisational and "script-switching" socialization processes connect the acquisition of cultural capital to the construction and deployment of public identities. Through public identities, the black middle class establishes both exclusionary boundaries between itself and the black working class, and inclusionary boundaries for itself with the white middle class. The differences between the three communities were not altogether distinct in this regard, compared to the ways in which they constructed their other status identities. Lacy claims that African Americans in Sherwood Park construct different status identities from those in Riverton and Lakeview. According to Lacy, African Americans in Sherwood Park distinguished themselves as "the elite" middle class because they perceive work as a pathway to independence, purchase luxury items to make their lives more comfortable, and are willing to sacrifice their own desires for their children's benefit. In contrast, Riverton and Lakeview African Americans perceive work as a moral obligation, focus on responsible spending to maintain their middle-class status, and require their children to purchase luxury items with their own money. In essence, those in Sherwood Park concentrate on status reproduction, while African Americans in Riverton and Lakeview concentrate on status maintenance.

These purported differences were less convincing than other arguments in the book. For example, Lacy suggests that African Americans in Riverton and Lakeview perceived private school tuition as a luxury. Yet when referring to particular parents in Sherwood Park, she states, "They sent both daughters to Prince George's County public schools, but Phillip and Michelle were disappointed in the quality of the schools. The girls now attend exclusive private schools in Virginia." This suggests that those black parents in Sherwood Park also perceived private school tuition as a luxury, but one they were in a better position to afford, and only as a last resort.

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Refreshingly, in chapter five Lacy moves beyond static discussions of social integration and uses "strategic assimilation theory" to suggest that all study participants move between black and white worlds, but particularly seek out spaces where "black identity is nurtured." Since African Americans in Riverton and Sherwood Park live in predominantly black neighborhoods, their blackness is naturalized and set aside, and their class identity is pushed to the forefront. The black residents of Sherwood Park draw class boundaries with their immediate black neighbors in Riverton, while African Americans in Riverton and Lakeview draw class boundaries with the black lower class. In the final chapter, Lacy claims that residential location and class position shape cross-racial alliances as study participants use their suburban identities to engage in school board and economic development politics.

Although Lacy's class analysis is fairly complicated, her historical discussions of class are far less nuanced. She relies on sociologists and historians such as W. E. B. Du Bois, St. Clair Drake, Horace Cayton, E. Franklin Frazier, Bart Landry, and Willard Gatewood to explain how the black middle class has been defined since the Civil War. Perhaps it would have been more revealing to frame this discussion around how sociologists historically have looked at race and class. Historical works such as Nick Salvatore's *We All Got History: The Memory Books of Amos Webber* (1996) and Andrew Wiese's *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (2004) suggest a more complicated understanding of black middle-class life and would have provided the historical context for the analysis of black suburbanization. Certainly, this would have added to her project, but does not alter the significance of her sociological findings. *Blue-Chip Black* should encourage historians to rethink the particularities of race, class, and place at various historical moments.

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Adelaide M. Cromwell, *Unveiled Voices, Unvarnished Memories: The Cromwell Family in Slavery and Segregation, 1692–1972.* Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007. Pp. 348. Cloth $39.95.

It's good to see balance again. After E. Franklin Frazier raked the black middle class over the coals in the 1950s, asserting that its members were mostly snobbish and ostentatious, for many years it became "not acceptable" to explore their contributions to the development of American or African American society. Then the 1960s emphasis on several grassroots movements reinforced that unacceptability. Even W. E. B. Du Bois eventually backed away from his early

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