

BOOK REVIEWS Elizabeth Borland, editor

Catherine Corrigan-Brown. *Keeping the March Alive: How Grassroots Activism Survived Trump's America*. New York: New York University Press. 2022. \$89.00 (hardcover), \$28.00 (paper).

Edwin Amenta
University of California, Irvine

Opposition to Donald Trump brought some of the greatest protests and fiercest political contestation in U.S. history. Immediately upon taking power, he was confronted by the first Women's March and was voted out of office in the wake of months-long Black Lives Matter protests, with many national events in between. But behind the scenes, there were many local groups engaged in political struggles against the Trump administration and its policies. Groups connected to Indivisible—an organization formed to contest Trump's agenda—are the focus of Catherine Corrigan-Brown's new thought-provoking book, *Keeping the March Alive: How Grassroots Activism Survived Trump's America*.

Corrigan-Brown focuses on questions these local groups had to grapple with as they sought to organize their supporters, mobilize them into action, and keep their operations afloat. The activists had to decide which tactics to employ, whether to form coalitions (and, if so, with whom), how to promote participation, and how to use the internet. Corrigan-Brown's main questions concern whether these decisions influenced the number of events the groups were able to sponsor and whether they survived their first two years.

The core of *Keeping the March Alive* addresses how thirty-five loosely linked, Indivisible-affiliated, activist groups in ten cities made key decisions and what their consequences were for the groups. These cities span the country and range in size from Pittsburgh and Atlanta on the more populous end to Springfield, Illinois and Pasadena, California on the smaller end. Using the national Indivisible organization's "Find Your Local Group" tool, Corrigan-Brown identified all the local organizations listed for the cities. Groups varied in the decisions they made about organizing and mobilizing—also in terms of the number and sort of events they sponsored, as well as their ability to remain active through the first two years of Trump's term. Holding events and survival are at the center of Corrigan-Brown's definition of success, and most did well by these metrics. Altogether, nineteen of the thirty-five groups put on many events, and twenty-three managed to survive through 2018.

Keeping the March Alive's findings are based on a novel engagement with data sources. The book relies on a study of these groups' Facebook pages. By scraping them, Corrigan-Brown was able to identify some 7000 of their events, which were then hand-coded. Facebook pages were also a central source of data regarding the group's decisions and individual members' online engagement, and these data were bolstered by interviews with twenty-five leaders and activists. The book makes a strong case for the value of examining Facebook data for social movement scholars; however, one year into the study, Meta (the technology company that owns Facebook) halted this sort of detailed data collection.

The decisions made by the activists about tactics and coalitions prove to be closely connected to the ability of the groups to stage events and remain active. Engaging in protest and taking electoral action were associated with group event numbers and survival rates, but even more important for these outcomes was diversity in tactics. (It should be pointed out, though, that tactical "diversity" did not include violence or force, as this term is sometimes used.)

A core finding is that many of the organizations' choices were shaped by the political contexts from which they emerged. For instance, forming coalitions helped groups hold events and survive, but opportunities to collaborate were shaped by the groups' political contexts. In larger cities with stronger histories of activism, groups could join with movement organizations, but that option was not as available elsewhere. Similarly, mobilizing people for collective action was more characteristic of larger cities, while smaller cities—typically more conservative—focused first on organizing, which involved developing leadership and other capacities to engage in activism.

The book's empirical investigations include but go beyond simple correlations and regressions by using qualitative comparative analyses. These analyses are valuable for studies in which multiple combinations of causes are expected to yield outcomes. Here, they are used among other things to show that some strategies worked better in liberal political contexts, while others did better in conservative ones. For instance, groups in cities without histories of activism, as in Salt Lake City and Amarillo, Texas, had better chances of surviving if they engaged with nonpolitical organizations. The interviews also help to animate the analyses and provide a vivid backdrop to the decision-making processes.

Along the way, Corrigan-Brown offers many insights into grassroots anti-Trump activism and provides some challenges to conventional wisdom.

The organizations could choose which progressive issues they wanted to address; as might be expected, about half chose feminist issues. The same number, though, focused on the environment or impeachment. Although most people think of Portland, OR as a bastion of liberal activism, the Indivisible-connected groups there mainly folded. The book also provides additional evidence in opposition to the “slackivist” critique, as online engagement was connected to claims of participation in protest and other face-to-face events.

I have some minor criticisms and suggestions. Since most organizations survived, I was curious to learn more about why some of them failed. I wanted to see the qualitative comparative analyses to include both tactical and coalitional strategies rather than analyzing them separately. I also wanted to know how these organizations handled COVID-19, which falls outside the study’s time frame, given that many activists were older women. In a more big-picture way, the Women’s March and the grassroots resistance were motivated by the same thing—the election of Trump and a new Republican Congress. These groups were not primarily trying to keep a march alive or to simply survive as much as they were trying to do other, arguably more important, things—contesting policy positions and intervening in elections. I wanted to hear more about these wider impacts.

But these comments are mainly calls for further research of this fascinating phenomenon. *Keeping the March Alive* provides valuable lessons for both activists and scholars, along with an impressively detailed snapshot of a key moment in liberal and left activism. Here’s hoping that after the 2024 elections, we will not need a repeat performance from these groups—contesting another Republican national trifecta—or ones like them.

David Forrest. *A Voice but No Power: Organizing for Social Justice in Minneapolis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2022. \$112.00 (hardcover), \$28.00 (paper).

Hillary Lazar
University of Pittsburgh

In *A Voice but No Power: Organizing for Social Justice in Minneapolis*, David Forrest tackles two questions: can social justice organizations be real agents of transformative change and how they do that. For Forrest, the answer is, “Yes, but . . .” As he argues, grassroots groups play a critical role in dismantling systemic oppressions under racial capitalism. That said, successful dismantling is not guaranteed. Activists face “hazardous political terrain” in a world defined by neoliberal

“capitalist realism,” and daily pressures to abandon aspirational, emancipatory goals for (ostensibly) more pragmatic, moderate concessions and reforms (p. 91). Thus, they are just as likely to uphold the status quo as they are to challenge it.

Part cautionary tale, part instructional guide on how movement groups can sharpen their radical edge, *A Voice but No Power* provides a compelling institutional ethnography of three post-Great Recession Minneapolis social-justice organizations—North High Community Coalition, the Minnesota Bailout Coalition, and the Welfare Rights Committee (WRC)—and their efforts to navigate this hazardous terrain, further intensified by the financial collapse. Based on four years of immersive fieldwork, Forrest blends his own observations as an active, if ancillary, participant in these groups with perspectives from fellow members, resulting in an insider’s view into the divergent paths they took and how this led to vastly different outcomes.

According to Forrest, how social justice organizations assemble “contentious identities” (p. 90)—the way they self-understand and outwardly present themselves—is key to whether a group will move beyond “voice,” i.e., symbolic representation, to real “power,” i.e., substantive change through community mobilization. He explains that groups with the most “emancipatory and egalitarian potential” adopt adversarial, intersectional identities and political “etiquettes”—organizational rules, norms, behaviors, etc.—that use oppositional rhetoric to build broad-based grassroots support (p. 219). Furthermore, “militant minorities” within these organizations must make their unapologetic demands for systemic change and stave off internal pressures to go in moderate directions (p. 139).

Using the WRC as the emancipatory foil for more accommodationist approaches, Forrest shows how the conciliatory identities and etiquettes of North High and the Bailout Coalition resulted in limited reforms at the expense of broader structural transformation. For instance, in their initiative to save a neighborhood high school, North High leadership emphasized “being positive” and cooperative partnership with local politicians to improve job readiness for low-income students of color (p. 110). Leaders of the Bailout Coalition, meanwhile, opted for color-blind language that downplayed racist predatory lending in their anti-eviction work. In so doing, they not only actively shut down more critical perspectives, but obscured the “deep-rooted market oppressions” driving these issues (p. 181).

The socialist-led WRC, however, cultivated an identity predicated on “fighting back” against “the full range of injustices associated with welfare participation,” including racial and gendered in-

equalities under capitalism (p. 182). And, unlike North High and the Bailout Coalition, which primarily relied on their organizational staffs and veteran activists, the WRC actively mobilized welfare recipients. This enabled them to push for what Forrest refers to as “abolitionist” movement goals; in essence, “radical incrementalist” policies such as universal rent control, expanded public housing, and increased cash assistance, which he asserts “prioritize ending systemic oppression over maintaining capitalist markets” (p. 65).

There is much to admire about *A Voice but No Power*. It opens a well-researched and thought-provoking window into how neoliberalism shapes activism and the hard choices (and often heated debates) that activists face. Moreover, the centrality Forrest places on internal identity work grants activists greater agency than literature focused on external factors inhibiting a social justice organization’s potential. These are not passive actors; they choose to treat the hazards they face as fixed constraints or obstacles to overcome. Indeed, activist complicity in the entrenchment of neoliberalism is one of the book’s incisive takeaways.

That said, there are some aspects to the work that give pause. To begin with, Forrest makes a strong assumption that social justice groups *want* systems change. Yet, as he himself points out, it is often the case that organizational leaders have fully bought into capitalist realism. In addition, while “militant minorities” might sometimes be able to push moderate groups in radical directions—a boring-from-within strategy—his account makes it clear this is not always the case. It would be helpful to have further consideration of ways to strengthen radical flanks; how this plays out in horizontal organizations where leadership is less of a factor; or even interorganizational dynamics between radical incrementalists and more revolutionary movement groups.

It is also hard not to wonder how Forrest’s analysis might change were he to conduct his fieldwork today. Throughout the book, he emphasizes the need to counter public ignorance of market oppression, implicitly by an “educate, agitate, organize” model. In the last decade, however, we have witnessed an eruption of global social protest, with Minneapolis as a core site in the wake of the police killing of George Floyd. It has contributed to popular understandings of economic inequality, systemic racism, and intersectional frameworks, while eroding faith (especially among younger generations) in capitalism and the status quo.

And finally, a semantic quibble: post-2020, for most activists (and movement scholars), “abolition” relates to prison abolition and dismantling oppressive systems that undergird state violence. Although Forrest’s redefinition of the term to

essentially mean social welfare reforms is not entirely out of step with this campaign, virtually no explicit discussion of policing and decarceration was puzzling. Greater engagement with other work on abolition or theories of collective identity and activist framing, for that matter, could better situate and deepen his study.

These observations notwithstanding, *A Voice but No Power*, is an important contribution to movement theory and institutional analysis of social justice organizations. Forrest offers poignant insights on how market supremacy permeates movements and why organizational identities, and the ways activists leverage them, are essential for building a more equitable and free society. This will no doubt be of interest to movement scholars, political theorists, grassroots organizers, and anyone looking to better understand the inner workings of activist groups and their efforts to bring about transformational change.

Michael D. Minta. *No Longer Outsiders: Black and Latino Interest Group Advocacy on Capitol Hill*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2021. \$95.00 (hardcover), \$30.00 (paper).

Marcus Board
Howard University

Michael Minta’s *No Longer Outsiders: Black and Latino Interest Group Advocacy on Capitol Hill* reinforces the significance of liberalism above radicalism in progressive efforts to improve the lives of Black and Latino people in the United States. This work is particularly useful for those studying Congress and the political and economic integration of nonprofits, specifically 501(c)(3) civil rights organizations. Their integration into institutional politics has had complex consequences in the U.S., something particularly evident when we examine the relationships between civil rights organizations and Congress.

The rise of descriptive representation, largely in the House of Representatives, including but not limited to the creation of majority-minority districts, has led scholars to new questions about the power of Black and Latino faces in high places. Minta is among those asking how much traditional civil rights organizations contributed to legislation benefiting Black and Latino communities. Regarding opportunities to testify before Congress and bills receiving markup hearings—what Minta calls “legislative success” (p. 4)—these organizations and their descriptive representatives have been relatively effective.

The project is clarifying the ongoing relevance of liberal progressive efforts, responding to

decades of scholarly and movement backlash critiquing the refusal to pursue more radical politics. To these claims, Minta begins with a twentieth-century history of civil rights organizations facing state political power that forcefully oppressed and destroyed Black and Latino communities (chapter 2). In response to such conditions Minta posits the liberal-collaborative strategy as a legitimate mechanism to engage with an oppressive state, as well as a means to measure progress when legislators are responsive to the political agendas of civil rights organizations (chapter 3). Minta goes on to assess the successes of descriptive representation in line with the political agendas of civil rights organizations as representatives of Black and Latino communities in the 110th and 111th Congresses (chapters 4 and 5).

These data reveal a statistically significant impact on the legislature for Black, Latino, and women representatives. While controlling for relevant factors like median committee ideology and the race and ethnicity of committee chairs, Minta shows these representatives both testifying and receiving markup hearings across diverse legislative committees. These include defense, banking and finance, macroeconomics, health, agriculture, public lands, foreign trade, social welfare, immigration, transportation, education, labor, agriculture, and much more. He concludes by addressing newer, less traditional, and more politically radical organizations which he refers to as “hashtag movements” (p. 130).

Of particular interest is Minta’s methodology and analysis of Congressional politics. As he says, roll call votes do not tell us much about the potentially extended process involved in passing new legislation (providing it does not simply die in committee). To these ends, Minta analyzes the prolonged joint efforts of legislators and civil rights organizations to address racial profiling by law enforcement, sentencing disparities between crack and cocaine, and—perhaps his most important finding—the crossracial implications of minority representatives promoting legislation from civil rights organizations in communities outside of their own (i.e., how Black representatives are increasingly endorse legislation salient to Latino civil rights organizations). Formal inclusion into institutional politics is a longstanding conventional approach. The examples from the text help readers understand that these approaches continue to play a central role in efforts to improve the life chances and life experiences of oppressed communities in the United States.

As for the study of social movements, protest, and contentious politics, there are core aspects of

the text that are particularly instructive. Namely, Minta highlights the ongoing significance of (1) organized collective advocacy work; (2) the infiltration of state political institutions; and, by clarifying the ideals and strategies of these organizations, (3) the ongoing power of coalition building. Although these highlight the astounding benefits of the work, Minta chooses a different framing. Rather than considering the subversive possibilities of deliberately shifting agenda-setting power in Congress, he instead promotes a forward-facing strategy of slow and steady progress. As Minta notes, this is despite the challenging implications of civil rights organizations prioritizing their own existence and, perhaps, in that process, embracing the neoliberal public-private sponsorship model linking them with various corporations. Here, we are brought back to “hashtag movements.”

Among the challenges Minta acknowledges is a critique of civil rights organizations from Katherine Tate in 1994, foreshadowing how the Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) challenged liberalism as a basis for transformative politics and redistribution of power, as opposed to radicalism. Of course, there have been many more critiques since then, but Minta seems to not take seriously the politics or radical critique of traditional civil rights organizations levied from within and beyond the movement. As we might expect from any Congressional scholar, Minta points to the legislative process and success of traditional organizations as a validation of their politics and the way they achieve these gains. Recent scholarship from LaGina Gause (2022) acknowledges the impact of M4BL politics on legislative activity, albeit not explicitly connected to descriptive representation. I would have appreciated Minta integrating radical critiques rather than rejecting them, perhaps by arguing that engagement with Congress is one among many strategies that contribute to social change. Many scholars have taken this approach, some pointing to the diversity of movements as a key to success and others to the liberal deradicalizing of movements as a key to their downfall.

Nonetheless, Minta’s new book represents a valuable and necessary contribution. The analysis is thorough and decisive, providing excellent opportunities for readers to better understand the history, present, and future of congressional political analysis. *No Longer Outsiders* also contributes to a crossracial conversation that demands further political analysis. This work stands as a foundational text for the future of this ongoing and vital work.

Mohammad Ali Kadivar. *Popular Politics and the Path to Durable Democracy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2022. \$120.00 (hardcover), \$35.00 (paper).

Val Moghadam
Northeastern University

In a slim but comprehensive book, Mohammad Ali Kadivar provides quantitative and qualitative evidence that the duration of popular mobilizations matters for democratic consolidation. *Popular Politics and the Path to Durable Democracy*'s analyzes 112 cases from 1959-1960 to 2010 (ch. 2), then dives into the cases of South Africa and Poland, with a comparative look at Pakistan's 1988 military-led transition (ch. 3), followed by two Arab Spring cases: Egypt 2011-2013 (ch. 4) and Tunisia 2011-14 (ch. 5). Egypt and Tunisia are outside Kadivar's dataset for 1960-2010, but they provide an important example of failed transition (Egypt) and an anomalous case that initially succeeded (Tunisia).

In the quantitative study, Kadivar's primary independent variable is the duration of popular campaigns contributing to a democratic transition. His analysis concludes that Poland's lasted six years and South Africa's thirteen: the longest in the dataset.

Using his case studies, Kadivar examines five major components: pro-democracy mobilization and its organizational infrastructure, democratic transition, mobilization's effect on both leadership change and civil society, and the role of these factors in the survival or failure of the new democracy. Kadivar does not examine regional effects, though he stresses their importance: young democracies in more democratic regions are more likely to survive. This was the advantage of Latin America, Poland, and other European countries; in contrast, Tunisia's transition took place in a dangerous neighborhood, explaining the difficulties it encountered.

Refuting Samuel Huntington's "elitist" position that popular struggles hinder or distort democracy, Kadivar argues that prodemocracy mobilizations may increase the durability of emerging democratic regimes. Unarmed campaigns that mobilize over many years generate organizational structures that provide leaders for the new regime. They create stronger democratic institutions, forge links between government and society, and strengthen checks on post-transition government power. Here, Kadivar echoes Zeynab Tufekci's book *Twitter and Teargas*, and argues against the "horizontalism" celebrated by many

scholars. He is critical of the horizontalism preferred by young Egyptian revolutionaries; he notes that after Mubarak's downfall, there was no clear agenda for change. In the absence of a strong organization to defend the democratic alternative, the Muslim Brotherhood—the biggest national organization—won the 2011 and 2012 elections. This Islamist organization, and Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohammad Morsi, a member, became unpopular, generating a wave of protests with calls for military intervention. The 2013 military coup portended Egypt's democratic backsliding.

Kadivar also takes issue with Piven and Cloward's assertion in *Poor People's Movements* that formal organizations demobilize movements and can be coopted. It is precisely those formal organizations, strategies, leadership, and alliances that are needed for successful outcomes. Moreover, some *ancien régime* corporatist bodies, such as trade unions, can play a pivotal role in mobilizations and democratic transitions: Tunisia is a case in point, with its well-known trade union, the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT).

All this is quite convincing. However, looking more closely at various popular mobilizations, one observes diverse pathways to democratic consolidation, with both violence and nonviolence. South Africa, for example, saw armed struggle as well as nonviolent contention, and an elite compromise with a pacted transition. As of 2023, South Africa is still a democracy, by Kadivar's definition. However, it suffers from extensive poverty, income inequality, and elite corruption, along with high rates of criminal violence and violence against women. Thus, in addition to the duration of mobilization and formal democracy, one may ask: can there be a durable democracy without socioeconomic justice? Should popular mobilization and democratic transition not be accompanied by popular welfare? Should we not measure human development or human security, including women's physical security?

Speaking of women, Kadivar notes that civil society can be comprised of progressive groups such as trade unions and human rights organizations, but he but does not mention women's/feminist and mobilizations. Nor does he consider whether women's political presence and social empowerment might influence the unarmed nature of a prodemocracy campaign or the quality of its transition and democratic durability. Kadivar mentions the power of large military institutions in countries like Pakistan and Egypt, but he does not consider the implications for pro-democracy mobilizations and democratic outcomes of such militarized masculinities.

Kadivar considers Tunisia an "anomalous" case because of the short duration of its pro-

democracy mobilization. He seems critical of the political parties that emerged at the start of the transition. Others, too, have criticized the large number of new parties that came and went, but could the crowded field not suggest enthusiasm for the emergent democratic polity?

Like many scholars of the Arab Spring, Kadivar is impressed by the UGTT and its decades of organizational experience, large membership, and capacity to negotiate and mobilize. I share that admiration. But what of other pre-existing civil society groups, including feminist organizations and marginalized parties such as Tajdid (the former communist party) and the Progressive Democratic Party (later known as Jomhuri and co-led by a woman, Maya Jribi)? Tunisia benefited from a large population of educated and skilled activists, scholars, and professionals who went on to staff the many new commissions that paved the way for elections to the Constituent Assembly. Kadivar points out that, unlike Egypt, power in Tunisia was divided more evenly between Islamists and non-Islamists, and there were no calls for military intervention. The main reasons lie in Tunisia's pre-existing civil society. In contrast, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood had worked for decades to organize in all manner of institutions, from NGOs and the lawyers' association to neighborhood services. This imparted an advantage over secular, feminist, and progressive groups.

Of course, Tunisia experienced its own democratic backsliding in summer 2021—which in my judgement had more to do with its economic difficulties and lack of sufficient international support than squabbling between political parties. It is conceivable that under alternative conditions, Tunisia could experience redemocratization.

The details about protests, elections, and transitions in Egypt and Tunisia will be instructive to non-specialists if familiar to Middle East and North Africa experts. For specialists, the book's best part is likely the extensive survey of Arabic-language press accounts in Egypt and Tunisia. I was also taken by the way the book begins on a personal note about Kadivar's upbringing in Iran and the experiences of his grandfather and father during two critical episodes in Iranian history. I was expecting to see the book end on a similar note, or at least a tentative application of the book's thesis to activism since Iran's 2009 Green Protests, including the women-led protests that began in September 2022. Kadivar's assessment of the nature of those protests, and their prospects, would have linked back to the introductory re-remarks while applying his thesis to another case. Perhaps such an analysis might be in the works.

Kadivar has produced a fine study and an important contribution to the literatures on social

movements, democratic transitions, and the Arab Spring. It will be excellent for classes in methodology as well as in an array of undergraduate courses and graduate seminars in political science and sociology.

Evan Lieberman. *Until We Have Won Our Liberty: South Africa after Apartheid*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. 2022. \$32.00 (hardcover).

Marcel Paret
University of Utah and University of
Johannesburg

In the run-up to South Africa's 2014 national election, the ruling African National Congress (ANC) campaigned on the idea that it had a "good story to tell." It was a response to growing concerns about government corruption, persistent poverty and inequality, and the recent killing of thirty-four striking mineworkers by police at Marikana—a scene reminiscent of past apartheid repression—among other ills. Against mounting criticism, the ANC's slogan sought to underscore the progress made since the dramatic transition from apartheid to democracy in 1994. The ruling party's election manifesto noted, "We are proud that South Africa is a much better place than it was before 1994."

Evan Lieberman's *Until We Have Won Our Liberty: South Africa after Apartheid* weighs in on this debate, seeking to "assess the strength and value of South Africa's still young democracy" (p. 7). Like the ANC in 2014, Lieberman has a good story to tell. He argues South African democracy has been "extremely successful," leading to what he calls "dignified development" (viii). The latter entails improved access to housing, water, and electricity, the countering of poverty through government grants, enhancements in health care and education, and—especially significant for Lieberman—improved race relations and commitments to human rights. As Lieberman states in his concluding paragraph, "Democracy in South Africa is working" (p. 260).

This is a bold argument. Critical voices continue to loom large, as they did in 2014, both inside and outside the academy. One of Lieberman's key goals is to counter unwarranted pessimism and negative assessments, which he suggests are misleading. He aims to provide balance by recognizing the country's achievements under democracy and ANC rule. He presents his analysis as a "reality check," (p. 258) showing how "democracy saved South Africa" (p. 260) from a more disastrous authoritarian path (pp. 258-260).

The analysis deploys a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods. Lieberman draws heavily on survey data, including an analysis of twenty different datasets. One of those was a survey of adults in Mogale City municipality, he conducted himself in 2019. With a focus on the 2019 national elections, Lieberman also observed political events (e.g., rallies, council meetings, polling stations) and conducted “several dozen interviews” (ix) in Mogale City. One highlight of the book is the way in which Lieberman weaves a local focus on Mogale City, a mid-sized municipality about 40 kilometers outside of the Johannesburg city center, into a national narrative. In addition, the analysis nicely combines statistics and locally grounded accounts from his observations and interviews.

To Lieberman’s credit, he does not portray democratic success as an unequivocal “slam dunk.” He acknowledges ongoing challenges, from high unemployment, inequality, and poverty to xenophobia and patriarchy. In fact, the general tone of the book reads as follows: yes, there are still plenty of problems, as well as remaining gaps to fill, but we should not lose sight of all the progress that has been made; and yes, there is corruption, but it is not much worse than anywhere else.

Is Lieberman’s account convincing? This will likely depend on the proclivities and background of the reader. The book provides fertile evidence for those seeking to extol the merits of liberal democracy. Conversely, readers who are familiar with South Africa may just as well flip the narrative on its head: Sure, there have been some gains in the postapartheid period, but South Africa is far from a success story. For those who have spent time in the country’s impoverished townships and informal settlements, where livelihood is often quite precarious, it is difficult to justify South Africa as a model of “dignified development.” To take just one example from Lieberman’s own survey, among Black residents of Mogale City living in state-provided houses, only 34 percent said they never felt unsafe walking in their neighborhood.) This is hardly a picture of dignity.

Lieberman is clearly quite enamored with South Africa’s liberal democracy, due especially to its system of proportional representation and opportunities for participation, namely via elections. He argues that persistent challenges stem from the past; in doing so, he undermines the significance of ongoing policy decisions and power dynamics in reinforcing current challenges. For example, in celebrating Nelson Mandela’s ability to direct and unite people, Lieberman largely ignores the role that Mandela and other ANC leaders played in reinforcing economic insecurity and inequality, both of which remain highly racialized. Indeed, income inequality is

greater now than it was under apartheid, and the poor remain almost exclusively Black.

A further limit is Lieberman’s tendency to root the evaluation of democracy in a comparison with apartheid. One might quibble that this sets quite a low bar for success. Lieberman affirms a desire to lower the bar when he remarks that Black expectations on the eve of democracy in the early 1990s were “almost surely too hopeful” (p. 100). By inviting the celebration of liberal democracy, he makes a comparison that may also discourage both further questioning, and more radical visions of redistribution and democratic deepening. Such radical visions underpin both a substantial body of critical scholarship on South Africa, and widespread protests. It is telling that, for Lieberman, such protests are not a source of pride or an indicator of democracy, but rather a cause for shame and dishonor. Indeed, readers of *Mobilization* will notice that the book has very little to say about social movements and protest, despite their abundance within the country.

With these reservations in mind, I urge scholars to read Lieberman’s book—alongside other, more critical, accounts—and come to their own conclusions about contemporary South Africa. *Until We Have Won Our Liberty* is surely one of most compelling defenses available of the idea that South African democracy has a good story to tell.

Kathryn Abrams. *Open Hand, Closed Fist: Practices of Undocumented Organizing in a Hostile State*. Oakland: University of California Press. 2022. \$85.00 (hardcover), \$29.95 (paper).

Kevin Escudero
Brown University

The political and legal landscape surrounding the immigrant community activists—particularly those who are undocumented in the U.S.—underwent significant developments over the past fifteen years. These developments included the introduction of the Border Protection, Anti-terrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (more commonly known as H.R. 4437), which would have made undocumented immigrant status a federal crime; nationwide protests by immigrants and their allies in 2006 opposing the enactment of H.R. 4437; the near passage of the federal Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act in 2010, which would have provided a pathway to citizenship for a subset of undocumented immigrant youth; the 2012 introduction of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, which offered a reprieve

from deportation for qualifying undocumented immigrant youth; and Trump's ending of the DACA program in 2017. Given the law's nature as a double-edged sword, these developments both curtailed and safeguarded the rights of undocumented immigrants, with directly impacted community members playing a pivotal role in the formation of laws that promoted immigrant rights.

Focusing on the implications of these developments in Arizona, a "battleground" state in the formation of the nation's immigration laws, interdisciplinary scholar Kathryn Abrams's *Open Hand, Closed Fist: Practices of Undocumented Organizing in a Hostile State* asks how and under what circumstances were undocumented immigrant activists able to build a successful statewide movement with national-level implications, especially amidst the ever-present threat of deportation? In answering this question, Abrams draws upon the metaphor of "open hand, closed fist," first offered by one of her interviewees: Carlos Garcia of Puente. "Open hand" refers to building community members' capacity and promoting internal networks of care, while "closed fist" refers to communities coming together and mobilizing to fight harmful state and federal policies (pp. 67-68). *Open Hand, Closed Fist* is a carefully researched and powerfully written book that provides a unique take on how undocumented immigrant activism, even in the context of a hostile local political climate, can thrive and allow for immigrants to envision new ways of belonging in the United States today.

Legal scholarship on immigration federalism has often explored the tense coexistence of sub-federal immigration lawmaking practices alongside the federal government's absolute and sole authority in regulating immigration into the United States. Relatedly, social movement scholarship on immigrant political mobilization has demonstrated how, even in the most favorable circumstances, advocating for undocumented immigrant rights requires careful messaging and the development of innovative, bipartisan strategies to advance their cause.

Drawing on four years of ethnographic research with five immigrant rights organizations in Arizona and almost 100 semistructured interviews with undocumented immigrant activists and their allies, *Open Hand, Closed Fist* contributes to and advances these literatures in three specific ways. First, it provides a thorough recounting of the context surrounding the emergence of the DACA, Undocubus, and Not 1 More Deportation campaigns, all with their roots in Arizona-based immigrant rights organizations. Second, it incorporates a sustained analysis of the importance of emotions and emotional repertoires at the individual, organizational, and national levels to the

success of the contemporary U.S. immigrant rights movement. Third, it shows how high the stakes are for the formation of the broader national movement to have local level organizing in a hostile state such as Arizona.

Abrams organizes the book into four sections to demonstrate how the practice of "open hand, closed fist" unfolded from 2005 to 2017. The first section consists of an overview of the legal and political landscape that led to the movement's formation informed by social movement theory, while the second section gives readers an overview of the movement's development through the lenses of three interrelated practices of experiential storytelling, organizational emotion cultures, and performative citizenship. The third section discusses how movement participants "engaged with government actors" as part of the DACA, Undocubus, and the Not 1 More Deportation campaigns, and the fourth section brings us into the throws of the Trump era, demonstrating the ways that lessons learned from the Arizona fight subsequently became increasingly applicable to those occurring at the federal level; Arizona was no longer the outlier, but the norm (pp. 98-99).

While *Open Hand, Closed Fist* provides readers with a comprehensive take on immigrant rights organizing in Arizona over the past decade, Abrams also draws our attention to additional opportunities to examine the context in which movement participants drew inspiration from the U.S. civil rights movement, namely the Freedom Rides and nonviolent acts of civil disobedience. This especially piqued my interest given that the U.S. immigrant rights movement has taken place alongside the Movement for Black Lives and that Black undocumented immigrants have organized many times as part of both movements. In this regard, scholarship on Black undocumented immigration can and should be read alongside works such as Abrams's about immigrant political mobilization).

Overall, I highly recommend Kathryn Abrams's *Open Hand, Closed Fist* as it offers a fresh take on an extremely powerful movement of our time—the U.S. immigrant rights movement—from the perspectives of the very community members and community-based organizations at the forefront of this struggle. This book will be of particular interest to individuals researching contemporary U.S. immigration politics, movement strategies (including those employed by individuals with a tenuous or liminal legal status), and the role of emotions in the political sphere. It is especially well-suited for students in upper division undergraduate and/or graduate seminars seeking models that showcase the importance of a local case study when examining the challenges and successes of establishing a national social movement.

Marcel Paret. *Fractured Militancy: Precarious Resistance in South Africa after Racial Inclusion*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. 2022. \$125.00 (hardcover), \$29.95 (paperback)

Hannah J. Dawson
University of the Witwatersrand

Since the late 2000s, South Africa has experienced a consistent wave of militant local protests in poor townships and shack settlements across the country. The intensity of popular mobilization has led some to consider South Africa the “protest capital of the world,” a title dubbed by Professor Kate Alexander of the University of Johannesburg. The frequent occurrence and militancy of popular resistance are indicative of widespread dissatisfaction with democracy’s failure to improve the lives of the Black majority. *Fractured Militancy: Precarious Resistance in South Africa after Racial Inclusion* by Marcel Paret sets out to explain why these local struggles have not cohered into a unified movement for redistribution of wealth or produced a decisive rupture with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) despite declining electoral support. In short: why are protests both militant and fragmented?

The book presents a compelling account of popular protests in postapartheid South Africa, the complex terrain on which such struggles are organized, and the reasons why they are weak and riven with divisions. It is a carefully researched work that, in a captivating and nuanced manner, masterfully weaves together theoretical debates, a wide-ranging engagement with histories of popular resistance, and the voices of key protagonists in contemporary protests.

Paret analyzes the protests in terms of Antonio Gramsci’s idea of passive revolution (a topic of lively debate in South Africa) to show how the ANC liberation movement cum ruling party incorporated popular forces and redirected popular demands toward the government delivery of public resources. Key to Paret’s argument are the ways in which these popular mobilizations are entangled with the expectations associated with racial inclusion, which makes them vulnerable to co-option and fragmentation.

Prior to the first democratic elections, and for the almost three decades afterward, the ANC consistently promised a “better life for all.” The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which served as the party’s manifesto in 1994, promised a wide range of material improvements, including improved access to housing, water, electricity, and social security. While there

have been noticeable gains in the provision of basic services since the end of apartheid, and social grants have made progress in reducing absolute poverty, the Black majority are nonetheless condemned to a life of unemployment and destitution. The statistics are stark: unemployment is at over 40 percent, almost one in five urban residents live in shacks on the urban periphery, and inequality is extreme and highly racialized. Paret shows how the Black majority’s expectation of a “better life” not only set the stage for feelings and expressions of betrayal towards an ANC elite, but it also provided elites with a pretext for pursuing their own narrow interests through the state.

After an introduction that lays out these issues, the first and second chapters offer some historical background. The first discusses the anti-apartheid struggle and the negotiated settlement that has done little to address structural inequalities undergirding protests in the postapartheid period. The second turns to the four case study areas and explores the pervasive accusation of betrayal. The next three intersecting chapters delve into why local protests have not cohered around a broader movement for social change despite common grievances and shared repertoires of action.

The protests analyzed by Paret take place in four impoverished Black neighborhoods on the periphery of Johannesburg: Bekkersdal, Motosoledi, Thembelihle, and Tsakane¹⁰. While a lack of services, high unemployment, and deepening inequality are shared characteristics of all four areas, their histories and political dynamics are quite distinct. The book reveals that these differences are central to understanding why local protests reinforce divisions and remain disconnected.

The limitations of place-based notions of communities to secure recognition and forms of service delivery from the state, what Paret calls “administrative fixes,” (p. 24) are the focus of chapter 3. While activists deploy the discourse of community to rally support and imbue their struggles with moral legitimacy, notions of community reduce popular demands to struggles of housing, electricity, and water. This prompts competition over scarce public resources and contributes to the isolation of activists in different neighborhoods. A narrow focus on administrative fixes also exacerbates hostilities toward foreign-born residents, which leads to a dialectical interaction between local protests and anti-immigrant violence—discussed at length in chapter 4. Especially interesting is the contrast Paret draws between the township revolts in the 1980s that saw workers withdrawing their labor in support of broader political struggles—giving rise to what Edward Webster (1988) termed “social movement unionism,” and local protests today, where work-

place organizing is increasingly detached from local struggles. This reflects important economic shifts and a situation where unionized workers represent a small, and declining, proportion of residents in the communities where these local uprisings are most prevalent. The divergent political orientations (and class politics) of local struggles in the four areas is the focus of chapter 5. Paret's analysis challenges portrayals of local protests as being primarily about intra-ANC politics and power struggles, showing instead how local protests, at least in some instances, take place outside of the ANC.

Marcel Paret's *Fractured Militancy* makes an important contribution to scholarly debates on social movements, contentious politics, racial inclusion, and inequality. It offers insightful analysis of the dynamic interaction between popular struggles from "below" and elite movements and class struggles from "above." While the book draws parallels to movements for racial inclusion in the United States, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, his discussion would benefit from engaging with other postcolonial and postrevolutionary contexts across Africa that share many of the same contradictions. Equally, Paret's book could go further to engage with the wider economic context that undermines working class unity and disables more radical redistribution. The book thus opens important debates not just in South Africa, but also across many post-colonial contexts, and will inspire further research on these questions. It is a work that needs to be read not only by scholars of social movements and racial inclusion, but also by activists and organizers who want to confront rising inequalities across the world.

Nimmi Gowrinathan. *Radicalizing Her: Why Women Choose Violence*. Boston: Beacon Press. 2021. \$24.95 (hardcover), \$14.95 (paper).

Rebecca Haines
McGill University

Depictions of women fighters typically portray them as attractive anomalies—rare, intriguing figures who transgress, but do not transcend, femininity norms. Interpretations of the motivations of women fighters often infer a lack of agency or the absence of politics, presuming they reach the battlefield through less conscious processes than male fighters do. In *Radicalizing Her: Why Women Choose Violence*, Nimmi Gowrinathan provides a potent alternative image, elucidating the female fighter as deliberate and politically self-aware. The book draws on an extensive dataset of interviews with women fighters

from contexts including Sri Lanka, Columbia, and Syria, documenting their motivations, combatant experiences, and postconflict lives.

Women combatants make up a sizeable proportion of fighters (Gowrinathan cites thirty percent) but are rarely treated as a serious political force both during and after conflict. Peace negotiations, combatant reintegration programming, and asylum assessments remain deeply gendered, which either sidelines women or impels them to construct narratives of victimhood and to perform femininity to be visible. Gowrinathan's book underscores how taking women combatants seriously requires re-thinking how we expect women to present themselves as peaceful while absorbing layers of violence, and how such constructions can tend to marginalize women from power.

Radicalizing Her is organized into two parts, each with three sections. Part One (Sites of Struggle) has chapters on the battlefield, the stage, and the streets. Part Two (The Battlefield) is structured around three lines of defense: first, second, and third. Throughout, conversations with women fighters appear alongside Gowrinathan's analysis, high-lighting common themes such as political agency, survival, and frustration with how conflict-affected states, Western governments, and international organizations view women combatants.

This structure can be hard to follow. There is a disjuncture between the organizing logics of the two main parts and occasionally disorienting structural organization within them. Further, some key points from the first part reappear in different forms in the second, leading to a degree of repetitiveness.

Gowrinathan puts forward two main arguments. First, she contends that women fighters should be taken seriously as political agents who rationally choose violence. Of her interviewees, she notes "they describe their years on the battlefield . . . as a deliberate participation in a process—one with access to a previously forbidden political space" (p. 10). She challenges the liberal, Western, and often feminist overassociation of women with peace, and what she sees as the prevailing Western consensus that only principled nonviolence deserves support.

Second, Gowrinathan argues that motivations of women to fight are rooted in the layers of violence they experience. "My goal . . . is to slowly reveal the myriad of external forces that threaten the existence of the woman who eventually takes up arms" (p. 4). She positions state violence against women and their communities as the most encompassing forms of violence, with communal and family violence as more proximate underlying layers. While some feminist writers have analyzed states and international systems as reflecting patriarchal social norms, Gowrinathan sees the

causality as reversed. In her reading, the woman fighter is “conscious of patriarchy but positions it carefully inside a complex project of equality,” (p. 3) within which resisting the state is a primary motivation to fight.

While the book works well as a critical archive of new images for the female fighter, it also rests on some analytical imprecision that may function to further obscure the diversity of women combatants. This stems from the similarities among the interviewees. Gowrinathan profiles only women combatants who are resisting predatory state security forces but argues that the experience of extreme asymmetry between women and state violence is generalizable. Here, she points to the many ways that Western states fail to prioritize women’s rights or address gender-based violence.

While this point is important, Gowrinathan has women fighters invariably embracing violence in service of self-defense and community protection from state aggression. Specifically, she theorizes women fighters as using the “violence of the violated” (p. 21). This focus fails to account for women who participate in state armed forces, as well as cases in which women fight against forces not associated with the state or not necessarily more powerful (for example, in cases of intercommunal conflict). It remains unclear if she sees these women as part of any kind of resistance and if their violence can be understood as being that of the violated. In addition, the book neglects cases in which women fight on multiple sides amid competing claims of oppression.

Despite her own persuasive critiques of how women combatants are viewed, this selective portrayal of women combatants still subtly relies

on ideas of female victimhood to interpret the motivations of the female fighter. By avoiding a full-spectrum portrayal of women combatants, violence only ever appears as a woman’s last resort. A more comprehensive treatment would require wrestling with those cases in which women fighters have a more ambiguous claim to the violence of the violated.

The author also occasionally caricatures those she aims to challenge, particularly by presenting Western feminism and liberalism as joining in a stable consensus to support nonviolence. To the degree that any such consensus exists, it is inconsistently applied. Both Western states and Western feminists have a history of supporting violence where it is read as advantageous, helping to explain (for example) why Kurdish female Peshmerga units are more often embraced as feminist heroes in the West than are women members of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia—People’s Army (the FARC), or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (Tamil Tigers). Gowrinathan fails to analyze the shifting instrumentalization of gendered images and narratives that help justify why violence is supported in some cases and condemned in others.

Despite these drawbacks, this book is an effective pushback against prevalent gender tropes, contributing to establishing alternative images of women combatants. It is likewise a salient reminder of the importance of reading armed resistance to the state through the lens of state violence. The book makes a critical contribution to Gowrinathan’s own aim of “exploring new landscapes of political possibility,” (p. 4) in which women combatants are fully seen and taken more seriously.
