

tions of the five Native men in Victoria? Nor was I convinced by Arnett's argument that this violent method eliminated "active hwulmuhw resistance" (p. 110). For a thorough assessment of the true impact of the "colonial war" as a deterrent to Aboriginal resistance, Arnett should have examined the post-1863 period in greater depth than his ten-page epilogue allows. Moreover, Arnett offers numerous examples of the continuance of Aboriginal protests, though non-combatant ones, to challenges to their autonomy and lands. My criticisms aside, if we take *Terror on the Coast* as an exposition of an episode within a larger process of colonialism, then this book has an crucial story to tell.

Constance Backhouse. *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950*. Toronto: Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History and University of Toronto Press, 1999.

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This text duly undermines the popular collective notion of Canada being a more ethnically and racially tolerant society than the United States. With *Colour-Coded*, Backhouse digs up important pieces of historical evidence from archives across Canada related to legal practices and proceedings, scrutinizing their discriminatory interplay in the greater Canadian society. This means legislation, law amendments, licit prejudices, judicial practices, and court rulings are studied within a sociocultural and sociopolitical context linked to ideological perceptions of race. The analysis is presented in the very accessible format of case studies. And these are narrated comprehensively, in rich detail. All are accompanied by illustrations and photographs of the events or individuals involved. The visuals enhance the re-sketching of historical reality in post-Victorian Canada. What may be particularly jarring for certain readers, however, is Backhouse's racializing of every individual in her discussion. Thus, the adjective "White" becomes just as commonplace in this text as "First-Nations," "Black" or "Chinese." Whereas some readers may consider this an annoyance that burdens the text, it nonetheless de-normalizes the position

of White subjects who take for granted that their views of the world are universal. For a change, the subject, individual and discourse of Whiteness, from a Canadian perspective, are made visible and open to criticism.

In studying the shared cross-cultural ideologies about race taxonomy and White supremacy, Backhouse demonstrates how, in Canada, European anthropology influenced the making of legal rights and privileges, with preference given to Whites. She also examines the manner in which White men took liberties with determining who was of which race or of which ethnicity, without consulting the people in question. This is the incident of the first case study in which the Inuit, labeled by White administrators as Eskimo, were legally defined, not as a distinct people, but as a subset of the vague category "Indian." These problematic racial classifications—White, Red, Black and Yellow—also appeared, as Backhouse notes, on the Canadian federal government's census of 1901, with instructions characterizing each colour category by an ethnicity.

Also treated in *Colour-Coded* is the criminalization, begun in 1884, of the First Nations' traditional dances in the Prairies, and the injustices suffered by Wanduta, a Dakota elder and healer of the sacred Dakota society. Although invited to perform in a traditional Grass Dance in Rapid City, Manitoba, he was arrested and imprisoned in 1903 for his participation. In this chapter, Backhouse reveals how the federal Department of Indian Affairs, delegated exclusively by White men, was in theory established to legally protect First Nations traditions, cultures and values, but in actuality became highly instrumental in wreaking havoc with the political, spiritual, financial and cultural well-being of myriad Native communities.

Another analysis concerns the legal case of Eliza Sero, a Mohawk widow from the Ontario-Great Lakes region whose fishing net was unlawfully seized by the Canadian government. Backhouse explains that this confiscation deprived Sero of personal earnings. As the descendant of a Mohawk matriliney, whose traditions were founded on female economic autonomy, Sero had woven most of the seine net and agreed to share half its catch with the fishermen of her community. Backhouse pieces together Sero's individual history, as well as

the judicial recourse she sought against the seizure of her net.

Also supplied is a sampling of the discriminations Chinese male employers confronted in Saskatchewan. They demanded that their hiring of White women be legalized. Restaurant and rooming-house owner Yee Clun, an Asian Canadian, endured great opposition when requesting such an authorization in 1924 from the Regina city council. At the time, not only White men, but various White women's organizations contested Asian men's employing of White women for their small business. The Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) were but a few of those displaying their disapproval of Clun's petition. Moreover, supporting the predominant racist views of White legislators, certain White clergymen produced pamphlet propaganda regarding the moral hazards of White females working in close confines with Asian men. They allegedly became susceptible to smoking opium, rape, sexual temptation and interracial marriage. Here, Backhouse investigates the implicit prejudices of the White Women's Labour Law of 1912 and its application to Clun's case.

Next analyzed are the mob activities of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) in Ontario, encouraged by the complete nonchalance of the White police. The core biography of this chapter, however, concerns Ira Johnson, a young man of Black and First Nations heritage. Backhouse charts out the intimidation Johnson suffered at the hands of the KKK, the court and law enforcers. The terrorization began one day when Johnson and his White fiancée, Isabel Jones, were forced from his home by the Klan. Johnson was then advised to keep away from Jones; and this threat led to the KKK setting fire to his house, which burnt to the foundation. Numerous incidents are picked apart in Backhouse's historical reconstruction. She gives the history of the origins of the Klan, their ideologies, their rituals of cross burning, their terrorist tactics in different Canadian provinces in the 1920s, and more particularly their target groups in Oakville, Ontario during the 1930s.

The last case study deals with the ejection of Viola Desmond from the Roseland Theatre in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia, due to her racial identity. Refusing to sit upstairs in the "Black" designated area



of the Roseland Theatre, Desmond found a seat with a better view downstairs, her defiance flustering the White ticket-takers. Shortly thereafter, she was arrested, jailed overnight for 12 hours, and forced to share a cell with men. Adding to her humiliation, upon her release, Desmond was fined twenty-six dollars for supposedly violating the provincial Theatres, Cinematographs and Amusements Act.

The ambiguities in legalized discrimination and in discriminatory language are especially probed in this case study. Backhouse traces the amendments of certain laws, and deciphers the ambiguous meaning that encodes them. She also illustrates how legal amendments were constantly carried out in order to inhibit the rights of certain groups seen as a threat to the racial purity, financial enterprise and political dominance of White Canada. This legal ambiguity in itself created crevices in the laws that would subsequently work either for or against the initial intent of the amenders.

Through Backhouse's rich descriptions, the readers see how ethnic and First Nations peoples, singled out for socioeconomic and sociopolitical subjugation by the Canadian government, organized and resisted legally sanctioned discriminations. As well, certain of these case studies exemplify how, although marginal, there were those Whites who believed in, and fought for full equality of individual rights, privileges and freedoms, regardless of race, ethnicity and gender. The substance of this work proves that Canadian democracy, voting rights, civil liberties and individual/collective entitlement were doubtless coded "White" during the period studied. The endnotes are a wealth of information and thus an asset to *Colour-Coded*. Backhouse has not only meticulously documented archival data; she has placed them in expanded form on a web site, with a count exceeding 400 pages. From academic to layperson, this book is a must read. This elaborate, well-mapped analysis of the history of Canadian discriminatory legal (mal)practices and miscarriages of justice during the first half of the 20th century provide a clear and insightful understanding of the continued and inherent strands of racism in the legal structures of Canada today.