

bolder analysis by unpacking more thoroughly what kinds of men seem to adapt each persona. Rather than investing so thoroughly in identifying the characteristics of each type, she would be more daring if she explicated more fully what the existence and persistence of these types reveals about the status, possibilities, and challenges of African-American mobility in the professional world now two generations removed from the Civil Rights era.

That critique having been said, the findings in *No More Invisible Man* are straightforwardly communicated. The men studied here report facing considerable challenges in getting the kind of respect and deference they feel they have earned. They report having to overachieve, yet sometimes be strategically understated in talking about their approach at work least they been seen as too uppity, hostile, or socially incompatible. Indeed, the book covers a wide range of professional sectors, including medicine, academia, law, and engineering. As the terrain is so wide, the issue of whether there are particular circumstances confronting black men in any particular professional sector is not specifically addressed. Instead, the work is an exploration of seemingly successful black men and their relationship to the general white-collar work environment. The true jewel of this book, however, is that it encourages critical readers to consider how both race and gender work simultaneously in individuals' constructions of the social reality of their everyday lives and the assessments of their own agency in those contexts. This addition is a welcome and necessary advance over scholarship on black men that often privileges race and therefore is less attentive to interconnection of the two categories.

This Is Not Civil Rights: Discovering Rights Talk in 1939 America. By George I. Lovell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012. Pp. xx+259. \$27.50 (paper).

Kristin Bumiller
Amherst College

This Is Not Civil Rights offers a tremendously interesting analysis of what *is* civil rights; in fact, the book may do a better job of illuminating the meaning of civil rights in American society than the jurisprudential analysis that has attempted to define them over past 75 years. This book provides a rare glimpse at how ordinary people understood civil rights by analyzing correspondence processed by the civil rights section of the Justice Department in 1939. The research is based upon archival data, mostly handwritten letters from a wide variety of individuals across the socioeconomic spectrum and response letters, often pro forma, from Justice Department officials. George Lovell, a political scientist at the University of Washington, interprets these letters as a keenly engaged ethnographer, sensitive to the writers' cultural and regional circumstances. The author is also remarkably receptive to how the commonplace knowledge about life and the law is

revealed in these letters, allowing his readers to understand the sensibilities of people, often facing injustice of tragic proportions, without imposing an inelastic legal definition of rights.

The book astutely engages with other historical studies of the emerging role of the Justice Department in protecting civil rights during this critical period between the wars, but its primary focus is to counter current negative critiques about the desirability of rights-based thinking in contemporary legal discourse. He effectively responds to critics of a “rights society” such as Mary Ann Glendon, who claims that the Civil Rights movement has spawned an excess of rights-based claiming. Lovell also extensively engages with the idea of legal consciousness and the long tradition within sociolegal studies that has sought to understand the role, meaning, and significance of law in everyday life. But unlike previous studies of legal consciousness that have studied people’s perceptions of law in a post-civil rights world and relied upon in-depth interviews, Lovell’s research provides an inimitable vantage point both historically and methodologically. As Lovell notes, these letter writers evoke the idea of rights unschooled by more recent historical events (from *Brown v. Board of Education* to the Civil Rights movement) and formulate their arguments for the purpose of bringing their plight to the attention of a public official, rather than *ex post facto* constructing a story in response to questions from an academic researcher. Lovell treats these found documents with utmost respect by delivering a generous reading of the writers’ intentions, recognizing the probable harms each has experienced, and giving meaning to a layperson’s commonsense view of law.

The most important contribution of this work is its capacity to look “broadly at the legal claims imagined by nonspecialist complainants” and to envision “openings to alternative forms of rights protection” (p. 26). Lovell’s interpretation of the letters is acutely attuned to the writers’ creative invocation of law and morality; these interpretations open a window to individuals’ attitudes toward state responsibility prior to the growth of civil rights turmoil and their attempts to fashion their claims in ways that evoked a nascent sense of social justice. The book is peppered with interesting, remarkable, and sometimes odd examples of complaints and demands for redress. A labor organizer who escaped from a prison camp describes himself as “not a fugitive from law and order but a fugitive [from] outlaws and disorder” (p. 170). A dog breeder complains about a local ordinance’s failure to exempt professionals from provisions restricting ownership to two dogs (p. 174). A father poignantly argues that the removal of his two sons for not meeting housing requirements will ultimately cost the state more than providing him with the necessary provisions to meet the needs of his family (p. 175). Many of the letters report egregious acts by local police against blacks, including theft, physical brutality, and murder. Although this is not the purpose of Lovell’s book, these letters provide abundant evidence of how racial hierarchies were maintained by local policing and stories of conflict and survival in the midst of unbridled illegality and violence.

Lovell argues that these letters tell an “optimistic” story about the potential of rights in contemporary society (p. 178) by countering notions that rights-based claims are inherently constraining or extravagant. His evidence shows that neither is the case: individuals who “made aspirational claims to legal entitlements” often establish the broader social significance of their grievance and frame their claims in terms of larger democratic interests (p. 184). Lovell’s findings have enormous significance beyond their relevance to contemporary debates about the utility of rights-based activism; in particular, his work is suggestive of an intriguing hypothesis about the lost potential for a more expansive definition of civil rights. The letter writers often present strikingly broad conceptions of law and morality, evoking ideals of fairness, security, peacefulness, and democratic participation. Their notions of rights are often far more capacious than what has emerged in civil rights litigation, in which rights are often closely tied with group identity and comparable treatment. However, these letter writers are not well situated to see the cause of their situation as rooted in institutionalized failure (p. 196).

While civil rights doctrine has narrowly circumscribed the responsibility of the federal government to address personal grievances, these individuals often articulate a desire for a more responsive state that would address not only the problem experienced but provide for citizens’ fundamental needs and protect against antidemocratic forces at the local level. Moreover, many of the letter writers offer haunting visions of the failures of federalism to address the vagaries of racism perpetrated and ignored by local officials and link these failures to inaction at the highest levels of government. Further research in a wide range of topics, including civil rights, legal consciousness, federalism, democratization, local governance, and racial politics, will greatly benefit from Lovell’s thought-provoking reading of historical evidence and novel insights on the early foundations of a civil rights consciousness.

Defensive Environmentalists and the Dynamics of Global Reform. By Thomas K. Rudel. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi + 251. \$95.00.

Raymond Murphy
University of Ottawa

The very successes of modern rationalization (science, technology, the market, organization) in manipulating nature’s dynamics are turning back against the global environmental commons (atmosphere, oceans, forests, ice covers, etc.) of seven billion humans, degrading the capacity of their natural environment to render them services. The harms of reflexivity in this sense have not been mitigated by purposive reflection: societies have failed to agree in international negotiations to modify their practices; few have undertaken internal changes at the needed scale and promptness to avoid en-