the vibrant *animo* that motivated people such as Villareal, Blanco, and Gonzales to struggle on behalf of their people.

Frank P. Barajas
California State University,
Channel Islands

Adolph L. Reed, Jr., with a foreword by Barbara J. Fields, *The South: Jim Crow and its Afterlives* (New York: Verso, 2022)

I am old enough that I occasionally find myself challenged by a younger generation of anti-racist scholars and activists who insist that "nothing has changed" since the civil rights revolution of the 1960s overthrew formal, legal segregation in the American south. My frequent retort is that as late as the mid-sixties, for Black people, much of the South remained nothing less than a totalitarian society. Challenging the myriad and complex presumptions of white domination, by word or deed, would result in severe and swift retribution, even death, at the hands of fellow citizens or the state. For all that, as Adolph Reed, Jr. points out in his compelling memoir, *The South*, that regime was actually reproduced in mundane fashion, in largely unquestioned "little rituals of deference and superiority" (4) that shaped daily life and, for Blacks, ensured survival. Ultimately, Reed is interested in how the "official and unofficial protocols" of the Jim Crow regime "organized people's lives." (6)

As Barbara Fields points out in her characteristically incisive foreword to *The South*, as an "outside insider," Reed is perfectly poised to measure the degree of transformation and persistence in the region he has sometimes called home. A scholar and activist notorious for his penetrating critiques of identitarian politics and their frequent obfuscation of class dynamics, Reed poignantly and perceptively revisits his childhood in the 1950s and the 1960s in New Orleans. Yet, as someone who was born in New York and frequently travelled back and forth between North and South, Reed (b. 1947) admits that Jim Crow's "regime was never fully second nature" (13) to him even though he is of the last generation that lived it.

Segregation in post-World War II New Orleans was exceedingly complex. For example, as Reed points out, Blacks and whites often resided in the same neighbourhood (especially in *older* neighbourhoods), even on the same block. Nevertheless, they "didn't share neighborhoods so much as coexist in them" (16), with segregation applied or relaxed according to an unspoken situational code. The more insulated the encounter was from "the spotlight of public scrutiny," (20) the more likely the strictures of Jim Crow were to be relaxed, Reed claims. The ambiguous colour line in New Orleans, as Reed acknowledges, was also mediated by Catholicism, as well as the propinquity of Jews and Italians as neighbours and shopkeepers. The latter groups, while certainly considered "white" by law, also had to negotiate the antisemitism and nativism of their fellow white folks.

Despite such chinks in the armor of white supremacy, Reed is quite clear that Blacks in Jim Crow New Orleans remained second-class citizens, and that they justly "perceived the role of the police somewhere between antebellum slave patrols and an occupying army" (28) Nor does he harbour any illusions that the occasional interpersonal deviations from Jim Crow were "politically charged moments stolen by conspirators," (28) who secretly dissented from the social order of segregation. Moreover, the terms of such "fleeting instances of unrestrained decency" (29) were always set by whites.

I do think Reed may understate the degree to which New Orleans' "phenotypic

gumbo" (92) was atypical, embedded as the city's culture was in a long history of racial fluidity that co-existed with (and on occasion blunted) intensely expressed racism and full-on racial domination. Still, not surprisingly, Reed's radar proves especially attuned to class differentiation. The Black middle-class in New Orleans could "avoid situations in which they would be…demeaned by whites," and indeed, cultivated a "social status and economic position" that depended on segregation; the Black working class in the city was much more exposed to "all the forms of interaction with whites that expressed racial dominance and subordination." (31) These class differences among Blacks, Reed argues here, had "significant impact on the shaping of black politics" (41) after segregation passed into legal oblivion.

Reed's aim here is to trace his own experience as a way to chart the "ongoing renegotiation of the relation between race and power" (3) behind the former "Cotton Curtain" in the aftermath of Jim Crow, much the way a former denizen of eastern Europe might revisit the vestiges of "actually existing socialism" after the Berlin Wall fell. Working in rural North Carolina in the early 1970s, Reed discovered quickly that "changing conditions" in the former Jim Crow regime "provided incentives for changed behavior." (85) The white elite, whatever their residual private feelings, understood that they "shared a perspective and world view" (86) with the newly enfranchised Black middle class and acted accordingly. In Reed's view, the ability to adapt white supremacy to new conditions revealed that Jim Crow was *always* an expression of class and power, even when it spoke in the idiom of "race."

In his final chapter, set in the 1990s, Reed takes us through the rural "river towns" of southern Arkansas and northeastern Louisiana that he and his family had delicately traversed in the segregation era. Even with formal segregation long gone from these impoverished and isolated communities, he points out, "all these improvements have evolved from a foundation of social relations and class power built around the architecture of white supremacy." (110) And, in his beloved New Orleans, an interracial city government willing to repudiate "Lost Cause" mythology and remove Confederate statuary still presides over one of the most unequal cities in the US, beset by poverty, rampant gun violence, and racialized hyper-incarceration. As Reed points out, "the terms on which the white supremacist past has been acknowledged and repudiated actually obscure the sources of inequality" (137) in the post-segregation order, sticking to a benign (and, Reed would argue, toothless) celebration of multicultural tolerance. "After all," Reed muses, "things have been working quite comfortably for white political and economic elites as for black ones" (135) in the deracialized Big Easy.

Reed remains, as ever, a provocateur and a contrarian, ready to offer bracing formulations from a lifetime of observations and experiences negotiating the colour line and challenging the left to live up to its commitment to progressive social transformation. "Racial identity," he reminds us, "is willed or imposed, or both; it has no foundation outside of social experience." (77) The corollary, then, is that there are "no racial imperatives that demand expression of particular attitudes, behaviours, or social practices," something fully at odds with what Reed scornfully dismisses as "the post-segregation era's orrery of celebratory ethnicity." (88) As for "white supremacy," Reed insists, echoing Barbara Fields, it "was as much a cover story" for class inequality and exploitation as a "concrete program" for racial purity (137). Much of this hits

https://doi.org/10.52975/llt.2023v91.0026

the mark, though I suspect some readers may take issue with his rather cavalier description of the "banal instrumentality" (100) of light-skinned Blacks "passing" as white to avoid segregation and discrimination, whether temporarily or permanently. Surely, such efforts to navigate Jim Crow took an emotional toll. Indeed, remarkably, Reed's otherwise forthcoming memoir remains almost entirely silent on the phenomenon of "colorism," an ideology that did much to infuse class politics with racial phenotype, not least in New Orleans. Then again, as he remarks in another context, sometimes we just want to "get our oyster sandwiches and go home." (115)

Alex Lichtensten
Indiana University, Bloomington

Pallavi Banerjee, *The Opportunity Trap: High-Skilled Workers, Indian Families, and the Failures of the Dependent Visa Program* (New York: NYU Press, 2022)

Pallavi Banerjee's *The Opportunity Trap: High-Skilled Workers, Indian Families, and the Failures of the Dependent Visa Program* is a thoughtful, compassionate, and richly detailed study of the lived experiences of racialized, high-skilled migrant families in the United States. The book is comprised of seven chapters that pull off the feat of explaining and critiquing American immigration policy towards migrant workers and their families through thick description from the author's interviews with and observations of 55 married heterosexual couples hailing from India. From within her analysis of an immigration and labour regime characterized by severe governmentality, gendered and racialized subordination and surveillance, and intense stress placed on workers' personal lives, Banerjee vividly describes everyday people's struggles and failures to affirm their personal dignity and build a good life under such conditions.

Core to Banerjee's research design is her novel comparison of two different types of migrant worker households: those in which the "lead" migrant (i.e., the spouse holding a skilled worker visa) is a man who works in information technology (IT) versus a woman who works in nursing. This important variation allows Banerjee to trace how gender and occupation (and the concomitant caste, class, linguistic, religious, and regional diversity among her study participants) interact with the visa regime to change how spouses relate with one another and feel about themselves following migration. Banerjee's other key innovation is to focus significant scholarly attention on the "trailing" spouse, extending the earlier inquiries of scholars like Payal Banerjee (2006) and Bandana Purkayastha (2005). Under U.S. immigration policy, the trailing spouse necessarily holds a subordinate legal status through the H-4 dependent visa, which prohibits the holder from employment or obtaining a Social Security Number. Banerjee's crucial decision to focus especially on the women and men who are configured and labeled as "dependent" provides her readers with productive sightlines into the imbrication of labour with personhood and citizenship. It also reflects Banerjee's political and ethical commitment to an intersectional sociology that centers the margins, a theme that recurs throughout the book.

The Opportunity Trap begins with "The Anatomy of State-Imposed Dependence," a gripping introductory chapter that introduces readers to Banerjee's thoughtful, empathic rapport with the fifty-five couples in her study and her careful analysis of their collective and individual dehumanization under what Banerjee terms the American "gendered and racialized visa regime." The introduction also situates the study vis-à-vis relevant