

*Social Movements*, ed. Colin Barker et al. [Brill, 2013]), some account for why many organizers of prisms have more openly embraced socialist politics than they had before.

Han, McKenna, and Oyakawa are correct that there is still relatively little written about community organizing and its interface with social movements. Further, “dialogic” approaches to social movements (e.g., Colin Barker, Alan Johnson, and Michael Lavalette, “Leadership Matters: An Introduction,” in *Leadership in Social Movements*, ed. Colin Barker et al. [Manchester University Press, 2001]; Neil Davidson, *Nation-States: Consciousness and Competition* [Haymarket Books, 2016]; Marc W. Steinberg, “The Talk and Back Talk of Social Movements: A Dialogic Analysis of Repertoires of Discourse among Nineteenth-Century English Cotton-Spinners,” *American Journal of Sociology* 105 [1999]: 736–80) suggest that the metaphor of prisms and the “refraction” that they entail may have greater potential for the study of social movements, state making, ideology, and leadership than is realized in the book (see Valentin N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* [Harvard University Press, 1986], for foundational use of the refraction metaphor). Indeed, this perspective has strong links to more thoroughgoing theories of collective learning, including those that inform Ganz’s work, on which the authors draw (see John Krinsky and Colin Barker, “Movement Strategizing as Developmental Learning: Perspectives from Cultural-Historical Activity Theory,” in *Culture, Protest, and Social Movements*, ed. Hank Johnston [Routledge, 2009]). Yet, as these works still do not mainly study community organizing, *Prisms of the People* may be a critical link toward a deeper scholarly consideration of the structure, contexts, politics, and creativity of such groups and point the way toward one of the few grounds for optimism with respect to the potential for democracy.

*Grandmothers on Guard: Gender, Aging, and the Minutemen at the U.S.-Mexico Border*. By Jennifer L. Johnson. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021. Pp. vii+217. \$45.00 (cloth).

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Just 250 miles northeast of my home in Toronto, trucks occupied Ottawa for a month. Among the red and white flags, the antivaccine signage, and the occasional Don’t Tread on Me banner, the right-wing nature of this mobilization was on full display. Although recently leaked donor files suggest powerful business interests backed the convoy, one still wonders why rank-and-file participants—many of whom were white men—were willing to withstand below-freezing temperatures to protest lifesaving public health measures. Despite this question’s importance, sociologists have largely been reluctant to investigate right-wing activism even as it becomes more frequent and widespread. This context is why Jennifer’s Johnson ethnography of the right-wing nativist

movement at the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, *Grandmothers on Guard: Gender, Aging, and the Minutemen at the U.S.-Mexico Border*, is a timely, important contribution.

Drawing on an impressive 900 hours of participant observation and 25 in-depth interviews with members of the Minutemen movement's California chapter, Johnson gives readers a rare glimpse into the daily world of organized nativism. Her study is particularly riveting because she homes in on the elderly women in this otherwise hypermasculine right-wing movement. In the vein of Kathleen Blee's *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (University of California Press, 2008), Johnson demonstrates how the Minutewomen help normalize racism by creating social spaces "where nativism is understated, unexceptional, unremarkable, [and] woven into the fabric of daily life" (p. 12). Although they compose a minority, these self-styled "border grannies" (p. 36) are critical to the movement's success: they recruit new members, run the border camp, and manage the organization's PR. After the movement's eventual demise, the former Minutewomen return to their hometowns to lead anti-immigrant initiatives and introduce restrictionist agendas to local Tea Parties. Johnson thus reveals the mundane ways that racism, misogyny, and Islamophobia are normalized and sustained.

That these women are *grandmothers* constitutes Johnson's most surprising finding; herein lies the book's most significant contribution to political sociology. During Trump's presidency, the perceived loss of white racial privilege became an acceptable grievance in public discourse. But among Johnson's respondents, interwoven into this familiar narrative of white deprivation is also a strong sense of generational betrayal. Her interlocutors lament their adult children's lifestyles and liberalism. Having lost their children to Obama, the Minutewomen train their focus on their grandchildren. Policing the border, they believe, will help them protect the future of America from immigrants, Muslims, and a government intent on channeling resources to the undeserving. In addition to setting the Minutewomen in motion, the movement occasionally uses grandmotherhood as a strategic frame to give the movement an innocuous veneer. "Do I look like a vigilante?" a Minutewoman rhetorically asks Anderson Cooper. "I have five grandchildren!" (pp. 154–55).

Perhaps the most interesting way grandmotherhood comes into play is how it serves as a set of rigid norms the Minutewomen negotiate and resist. Just as I observed in my fieldwork, the southern border has been transformed into "a productive outlet . . . for the tensions arising from particular intersectional identities" *Divided by the Wall: Progressive and Conservative Immigration Politics at the U.S.-Mexico Border* [University of California Press, 2020, p. 28]. Among Johnson's Minutewomen, that intersectional tension stems from elderly womanhood. In the borderlands, they "invented new selves" that challenged norms requiring "old women to age gracefully and passively" and be "demure and dependent" (p. 36). Instead, these grannies insist on their own way of "doing old womanhood," often ruffling the feathers of their male, especially their younger male comrades (p. 19). And, paradoxically, proving

one's mettle as Minutewomen ultimately legitimizes a misogynistic gender ideology. Although some grandmas dismiss the antiwoman hostility they encounter as "boys being boys," other Minutewomen view it as an opportunity to prove they are "tough enough to take it" (p. 145). In other words, organized nativism enables these aging women to feel relevant, agentic, and appreciated. This is disturbing and merits the attention of progressive sociologists and politicians alike.

Johnson's fieldwork also reveals Islamophobia's prominence, something research about anti-immigrant activism (including my own) has failed to document adequately. In one fell swoop, a Minutewoman worries that a flimsy border invites "illegal drugs" and a "Muslim invasion" (p. 107) while also claiming the 9/11 attacks served as a convenient "excuse" for American businesses to outsource jobs to Mexico (p. 108). Fears around a creeping Muslimization of America are often juxtaposed with anti-Black remarks about Obama. Although these data are fascinating, the reader is left wondering how to make sense of it all. How should we think about the relationship between Islamophobia and anti-Blackness on the one hand and the more "typical" targets of the anti-immigrant movement on the other? And why is the southern border—not some other place—such a critical site for reproducing and heightening these vituperative ideologies?

Johnson notes that "most (but not all)" of her respondents "denied that racial or ethnic prejudice" motivates "their opposition to immigration" (p. 26). Indeed, she distinguishes between Far Right movements that openly embrace white supremacy and "conservative" ones like the Minutemen that subscribe to a nonviolent and colorblind form of racism (p. 26). But one wonders, is this distinction analytically (and politically) useful? Might it downplay that what these grandmothers are guarding *is* white supremacy—whether they are aware of it or not? How did the two Minutewomen who identified as nonwhite rationalize their participation? We learn so little about the rift implied in the "most, not all" characterization above. How did the movement navigate it, if it in fact it did at all?

These questions should not overshadow Johnson's contribution, however. *Grandmothers on Guard* immerses readers in a movement that, arguably, set the stage for Trump's victory. This reason alone makes the book of interest to political sociologists. Scholars of immigration, politics, gender, race, and aging can also learn a lot from the author's observations about how grandmotherhood—and I would add *white* grandmotherhood—can inspire political identity making, collective mobilization, and nativism. That the book is also a pleasurable read will make it appealing to any sociologist.

Back in Canada, the police have finally dispersed the truck blockade, and two of the convoy's leaders were arrested. One is a grandmother.