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Brokering Servitude: Migration and the Politics of Domestic Labor during the Long Nineteenth Century by Andrew Urban
(review)

Tena L. Helton

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and attend the trial. By journeying with the son of a war criminal responsible for their family's deaths, the brave survivors demonstrate a commitment to the togetherness and future of Cambodia and Cambodian Americans.

With this surprise twist, the film documents a collective sharing of memory. By joining the group, Pheng adds a vastly different, but necessary, perspective on past events. All memory is fallible and subjective, but that seeming weakness is actually the strength of collective remembrance. Memory grows to encompass different and conflicting perspectives—capacious enough to include those of both victims and perpetrators, as well as their children. The official documentation and assignation of blame cannot remake what has been lost, but as Siv's moving documentary demonstrates, the willingness to understand and share memories with others, even when the particularities of perspectives on events cannot be reconciled, enables new communities to form.

Daze of Justice supplements other films about the Khmer Rouge genocide and Cambodian American refugees, including *S 21: The Khmer Rouge Killing Machine* (Rithy Panh, 2003), *Enemies of the People* (Rob Lemkin and Thet Sambath, 2009), *Refugee* (Spencer Nakasako, 2003), and *AKA Don Bonus* (Spencer Nakasako and Sokly Ny, 1995), by offering a necessary transpacific perspective of cultural memory. While each of these films locates trauma in a particular region and critiques its inequitable structure of power, *Daze of Justice* makes a further contribution to the field of Asian American studies by historicizing, memorializing, and thereby revitalizing the traumatic but life-affirming connections between Cambodians and Cambodian Americans on both sides of the Pacific.

Jason G. Coe

University of Hong Kong

***Brokering Servitude: Migration and the Politics of Domestic Labor during the Long Nineteenth Century*, by Andrew Urban. New York: New York University Press, 2018. ix + 355 pp. \$40.00 hardcover. ISBN: 978-0-8147-8584-3.**

Andrew Urban's *Brokering Servitude* provides a well-researched historical perspective of the role of intermediaries in supplying and leveraging domestic labor in U.S. households during the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Far from ignoring a labor sector that has been traditionally excluded or elided from labor history, Urban explores the ways in which this class created a support system so that men, and some women, had the relative freedom to earn compensation for their work. He asserts that these domestic servants were the oil that kept the primary labor machine moving.

In a nuanced argument that accounts for the complexities of race and gender, Urban traces how the supplies of domestic labor were manipulated to serve growing middle-class wealth across the country. He focuses on four primary groups of migratory workers in structuring his study: Irish immigrants during the mid-nineteenth century, black refugees after the Civil War, white women émigrés, and Chinese servants before and after exclusion. As he highlights these groups, he also reveals how disparate types of organizations and agents, from employment and travel agencies to missionaries and federal officials, sought to leverage a mostly unregulated domestic labor market, but did so in ways shaped by race and gender. The result is a fully synthesized, complex argument that describes the drivers of the market and the discourse of labor in the nineteenth century.

Some of the most compelling moments in the text are those that include narrative, humanizing the effects of U.S. immigration policy during the period. When relevant and possible, Urban attempts to recover the voices of immigrants. He begins his study with a summary of the death of Chinese immigrant Ye Gon Lun, pointing out a historical “anomaly”: Ye, who died of tuberculosis, was not buried in a segregated portion of the cemetery. Tracing the reason for this fact leads the reader into Urban’s discussion of Nathaniel Greene Curtis and how Ye became a servant in Curtis’s home in Sacramento, California. Later, when he discusses Irish immigration in the mid-nineteenth century, Urban uses a letter from a domestic servant to anchor his discussion of how Irish labor was brokered. In his chapter about black refugee labor after the Civil War, he begins with a white farmer from Nebraska, who proposed to employ female ex-slaves. He explains how such a plan was doomed to fail due to various local and regional racist policies that would affect living conditions and, thus, the plan’s sustainability. Urban connects other analytic points to individuals as well, developing a scholarly text that is both intellectually significant and readable.

Urban’s argument is comprehensive, but his strongest and most relevant chapters to scholars of Asian American studies are about Chinese servants after the Civil War and into the twentieth century. In keeping with the general narrative method in the book, Urban describes a cartoon that encapsulates the complexity of the relationship between Irish and Chinese labor, including the racial stereotypes that infuse them and how those ideas were leveraged to affect politics. He also provides a counterbalance: the Chinese were not merely complacent and servile, despite the jobs they might hold. In chapter 3, Urban argues that the economic demands of white employers were in tension with the anti-Chinese sentiments of politicians. Moreover, the reality was that the “coolie” class of laborers became a category that revealed the “colonial fantasies of household employers” (103), namely that the Chinese were less human laborers and more machines. Specifically, Urban delineates the ways

in which the Chinese labor class was created and confined through federal and state immigration policy, which was driven both by racist sentiment and by market demand.

Chapter 5, about bonded Chinese servants, further clarifies the continued racial regulation of domestic labor. Beginning with an anecdote from a U.S. Marine Corps colonel who employed “Ah” See, Urban illustrates the patronizing racism undergirding U.S. immigration policy and prevailing cultural attitudes. Through a contract and bonding system, Chinese immigrant labor was highly monitored and regulated during the exclusionary period; the only Chinese allowed to work in the United States were servants, and there was no method by which they could transition from contract laborers to permanent residents or citizens. As the author indicates, this was the basis of a “guest worker” program as we understand it today. Denying residency status or citizenship created opportunities for exploitation because Chinese had no legal protections of due process. Urban’s contributions in this chapter reveal the dilemma at the time, as he discusses how immigration officials tried to have it both ways by upholding exclusionary policies while allowing opportunities for Chinese immigrants to enter and work in the United States.

The detail with which Urban traces the relationships between immigration policies, racism, and labor markets is valuable, and his arguments add complexity and depth to social historians’ explorations of labor—particularly Chinese labor—in the United States. In addition, this book is timely, partly because it resonates with the continuing contemporary political rhetoric about immigration and the economic “threat” of China, but primarily because it carves a space for discussing domestic labor as a major component of nation building. Urban draws links between race studies, immigration law, and gender studies and buttresses his arguments with the commentaries and reports of a wide variety of writers from the period. He organizes the book both topically and chronologically, building a comprehensive argument about labor policy and its enactment in the United States.

Tena L. Helton

University of Illinois Springfield

***Redefining Japaneseness: Japanese Americans in the Ancestral Homeland*, by Jane H. Yamashiro. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2017. ix + 216 pp. \$27.95 paper. ISBN: 978-0-8135-7636-7.**

Jane H. Yamashiro’s *Redefining Japaneseness* is an innovative and provocative addition to Asian American studies. Yamashiro introduces and analyzes the