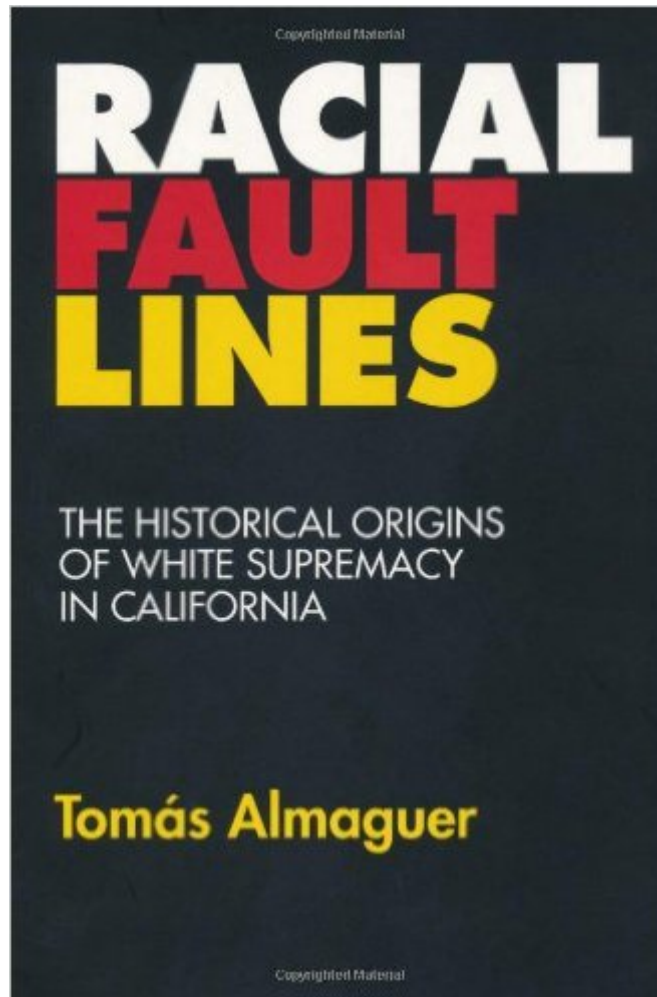


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Racial Fault Lines: The Historical Origins Of White Supremacy In California



Synopsis

This book unravels the ethnic history of California since the late nineteenth-century Anglo-American conquest and institutionalization of "white supremacy" in the state. Almaguer comparatively assesses the struggles for control of resources, status, and political legitimacy between the European American and the Native American, Mexican, African-American, Chinese, and Japanese populations. Drawing from an array of primary and secondary sources, he weaves a detailed, disturbing portrait of ethnic, racial, and class relationships during this tumultuous time. The U.S. annexation of California in 1848 and the simultaneous discovery of gold sparked rapid and diverse waves of immigration westward, displacing the already established pastoral Mexican society. Almaguer shows how the confrontation between white immigrants and the Mexican ranchero and working class populations was also a contestation over racial status in which racialization influenced and was in turn influenced by class position in the changing economic order. Partly because of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which granted U.S. citizenship and other rights, parts of the Mexican population were integrated into the emerging Anglo society more easily than other racialized groups. A case study of Ventura County highlights declining political and economic fortunes of the Mexican elite while showing how Mexican, Japanese, Chinese, and Indian populations were permanently relegated to the bottom of the class structure as unskilled manual workers. The fate of the Native American population provides perhaps the most extreme example of white supremacy during the period. Popular conceptions of Native Americans as "uncivilized and "heathen," justified the killing of more than 8,000 men, women, and children between 1848 and 1870. Many survivors were incorporated at the periphery of Anglo society, often as indentured laborers and virtual slaves. Underpinning the institutional structuring of white supremacy were notions such as "manifest destiny," the inherent good of the capitalist wage-system, and the superiority of Christianity and Euro-American culture, all of which helped to marginalize non white groups in California and justify Anglo-American class dominance. As other racialized groups assumed new roles, Almaguer assesses the complex interplay between economic forces and racial attitudes that simultaneously structured and allocated "group position" in the new social hierarchy. California remains a contested racial frontier, as political struggles over the rights and opportunities of different groups continue to reverberate along racial lines. *Racial Fault Lines* is an invaluable contribution to our understanding of ethnicity and class in America, and the social construction of "race" in the Far West.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I realized that racism influenced the history of our state, but Almaguer does a brilliant job at revealing the degree to which this sad statement is true. This is an important book for anyone who lives in California, especially for those involved in government, business, or public education. Racism has had a real effect on our state and people of color, and it continues to today. The knowledge contained in this book can help us move away from our mistakes and better understand how public action and government policies can change things, for better or worse.

Almaguer has given us a useful history of racial attitudes and white supremacy in nineteenth century Cali. Avoiding a "binary"-- or black/white-- understanding of racial relations, *Racial Fault Lines* traces the unique racial sagas of Mexicans, Chinese, and Indian peoples in their encounters with "white" Californians. Almaguer could do more to investigate interactions among such groups ACROSS the categories of "racial otherness": Mexican, Chinese, and Indian. Some readers will also question his chronology and wonder to what extent the 'origins of white supremacy' in California might have begun much earlier than the mid-nineteenth century, where his book focuses.

This book has lots of important information in regards to the history of California. You will be amazed by the facts divulged in this book and even compare to present California laws which are still in effect in regards to people of color. It's incredible what people in power will do to keep their power and the effect it has on the people who helped build the state of California. Excellent book and a must have for all, especially Californians.

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