

Michael P. Brown, *RePlacing Citizenship: AIDS Activism and Radical Democracy* (New York: The Guildford Press, 1997).

Central to Michael P. Brown's thesis in *RePlacing Citizenship* is the idea that there is no unitary space in which politics takes place. Politics occurs in a variety of spaces in which relations of state, civil society, and family can overlap. "Radical democratic citizenship" occurs where citizens are agonistic and antagonistic, that is, where friends come together with common social values to work for material change and to square off against enemies who do not share these goals. Thus, radical democratic citizenship does not occur through the formal mechanisms of citizenship, e.g. ballots in referenda and voting. However, what is most important for Brown is that radical democratic citizenship occurs in geographical spaces. These spaces, as Brown demonstrates, may be relatively empowering or disempowering for this model of citizenship.

Every current and former high school student knows about the politics of space. After last year's high school shootings in Colorado and in Alberta, several newspaper articles featured accounts of the social geography of Canadian and American high schools. It seems not that much has changed in the past fifty years. There are still lunch areas for the jocks, lunch areas for the juniors, lunch areas for those aspiring to a better social class, and the drama room for those who didn't fit in elsewhere.

In the forward to Brown's *RePlacing Citizenship*, Cindy Patton speaks of "virtual space" and "actual space." She notes that most of the time we inhabit a hybrid of these spaces. Thus, protective housing laws might afford only virtual protection if no actual apartment can be obtained (her example). In my day, the drama room operated as a rather infamous space for the queer and the Queer. The drama room was not only an actual place of refuge, but also an actual place from which we sought to empower ourselves through the creation of a more positive space. The frustration was, of course, that we were never able to fully actualize that virtual space because we had no access to control over the conflicting virtual space of codes and regulations of the broader school environment.

Brown's study is located not in schools but in the gay community in Vancouver. He first searches for radical democratic citizenship in ACT UP — an AIDS activist group priding itself on its radicalism. He concludes, however, that ACT UP fundamentally misunderstood the fluidity and shifting nature of the state by setting up a false dichotomy between the state and civil society. Brown then turns to the shadow state as it emerged in the government funded AIDS service organizations and the development of buddy programs in which members of the community provided direct support to a person living with AIDS. He traces not only their ability to provide spaces for radical democratic citizenship but also explains how these spaces developed into organizations in

which state bureaucratic experts provided services to clients thereby undercutting their radical potential. Finally, Brown analyzes the AIDS Quilt display, in which family space was remapped as civil society creating the opportunity for mourning and militancy.

I don't know whether what we did in trying to appropriate that drama room for our own ends was radical democratic citizenship or not. I suspect it was not. Like most Canadians attending schools outside of Québec, I don't think we spent a lot of time thinking about citizenship. Nor did we have any sense of entitlement in the drama room. We were not so much aware of being provided services by an organ of the state as we felt we were being placed in a holding pen for the duration of our adolescence. Perhaps that was what distinguished us most from our better-placed peers. For us, school had little to do with democracy or citizenship. Quite the converse — school was a penitentiary in which administrators showed us propaganda films (true!) to try to convince us that these were going to be “the best years of our life.” (A thought that drove some of us to contemplate suicide.)

I raise this point because, although Brown does not make consciousness of citizenship a precondition to “radical democratic citizenship,” I am left wondering whether it is necessary to have a sense of entitlement in such a way that “democratic” and “citizenship” make sense. I raise this point because not everyone living in the spaces governed by the state is a citizen. And in these spaces, there is no democracy for the illegal immigrant.

For example, at the time of writing this review, Toronto school boards regularly deny admission to students who are unable to provide proof that they have already come to the attention of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. This occurs despite provisions in the Education Act that require schools to grant admission regardless of the child's or the parent's illegal status. A similar situation occurs when illegal residents try to obtain health insurance for their Canadian born children. In both cases, parents can enlist the help of activists and lawyers to obtain these state services for their children, but obtaining the actual right to these services can come at the cost of deportation because of the regular sharing of information by these agencies with Citizenship and Immigration.

The actions of these illegal immigrants are mostly directed at survival. Their actions are also often self-consciously “political” in the broadest sense of that term. Indeed, I propose that illegal immigrants confront the meanings of “citizenship,” “democracy” and “rights entitlement” more directly than actual citizens in Canada do. However, to call the actions of these illegal immigrants “radical democratic citizenship” would be to evacuate the rich tapestry of meanings and rights associated with “democracy” and “citizenship.” In doing so, we would denigrate the precise purpose of the illegal immigrant's struggle, which is often to obtain legal status and eventual citizenship.

These problems lie outside of Brown's work. If there are illegal immigrants in the politics of AIDS in Vancouver, they remain hidden in his study. I have no doubt that illegal immigrants with HIV are there in Vancouver and I have no doubt that the spaces in which they inhabit operate differently for them because unlike other persons accessing AIDS service organizations, they do not have the same access to health care.

I do not fault Brown for not addressing the status of illegal immigrants. I raise these issues because I think that Brown's work is misnamed. Brown has not so much RePlaced Citizenship as he has RePlaced Politics. Brown shows us that politics is geographically placed and that the diffuse nature of power in the democratic state places politics in overlapping spaces of the state, civil society and the family. Furthermore, he shows us that the construction of these spaces can empower and disempower political action. This is an extraordinarily important contribution.

My sense, however, is that the issue of RePlacing Citizenship remains. What are the differences between political action by citizens and non-citizens? How do spaces occupied by the state function to discipline citizenship? Does the state discipline citizenship differently than political action? Do certain spaces work to occlude self-consciousness of citizenship while other spaces work to bring citizenship to consciousness? Does relative consciousness of citizenship amongst antagonists affect the kind of political action they employ? Michael P. Brown's *RePlacing Citizenship* is a fascinating and requisite beginning for anyone interested in these questions.

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