



Amy L. Brandzel. *Against Citizenship: The Violence of the Normative.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2016. 236 pp. \$28.00 (paper), ISBN 978-0-252-08150-7.



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No Intersectionality, No Justice, No Peace

There are obvious incentives to advocate for “either-or” perspectives on social issues, especially in studies seeking to influence sociopolitical change and policy. It will be easier to publish articles and books that are either *for* or *against* a position. If you are a public intellectual, your chances of gaining supporters for your cause will be greater when you come down strongly on one side of the discussion. The same logic generally applies for theorists. *Against Citizenship*’s great merit is that it attempts to outline specifically, and in some detail, the danger in approaching social issues from this “either-or” perspective. Amy Brandzel asks: “How can we imagine a transformative politics for queer studies, one that creatively inhabits both a skeptical demeanor and a reparative affiliation with the political agencies and actors that we so often criticize in our work?” (p. xi).

Brandzel’s *Against Citizenship* thoughtfully reveals the danger of false dichotomies through a series of case studies. It argues that citizenship, inherently a normativizing project, produces many false dichotomies. Citizenship disciplines, regulates, and includes the ex-

cluded only “once they are marked as deserving” (p. 5). Said more simply, it “divides and conquers” populations. Through anti-intersectionality, it makes populations compete against one another for recognition. The inclusion and recognition of some will mean the vulnerability and disenfranchisement of others. Indeed, “the ever-lingering promise of citizenship has been one of the most resourceful tools for producing and maintaining anti-intersectional, anti-coalitional politics” (p. 4).

For Brandzel, citizenship is not only “a biopolitical and disciplinary mechanism of governmentality” but also a “moral and ethical value system” (p. 16), and those marked outside of the normative citizenship are “second-class citizens” at best. What is more, citizenship does not only work on a local/national level; it also works on a global scale, “as an international system of population management that renders global populations governable by dividing them into discrete subpopulations of particular nation-states” (p. 11). On either of these scales, inclusion works to reify the boundaries of exclusion (i.e., “I am not like those ‘undeserving’ people,” I cry, in or-

der to make my claim of acceptance, knowing that it is either them or me). This is why the state welcomes anti-intersectionality, as it projects that segregate categories of identity while simultaneously marking them as valuable or debased, legitimate or improper, human or inhuman, and worthy of life or abandoned for death (p. 23).

The three legal case studies in *Against Citizenship*—same-sex marriage law, hate crime legislation, and Native Hawaiian sovereignty and racialization—expose how citizenship, as an anti-intersectional project, confounds and obscures the mutual processes of settler colonialism, racism, sexism, and heterosexism. Brandzel starts with a well-crafted and insightful exploration of hate crime legislation and the surrounding debates in the United States. Since I teach in a criminal justice program and my work relates to Muslim identity and migrants in the post-9/11 world, the first chapter was particularly compelling to me. Brandzel looks at what the rhetoric of hate crimes legislation does: it helps tie hate crimes to the extraordinary, the heinous, and the past, while obscuring the everyday violence of structural racism (e.g., governmental in/actions or police violence). She attends to the selective enforcement of the law and to how the term “hate crime” seems to point directly toward non-government actors, so that state actions like police brutality are rarely, if ever, marked as a hate crime. To a certain extent, all this has been said already (and the author’s literature review provides ample evidence). However, once again, what is most original and compelling here is Brandzel’s thoughtful case against the either/or perspective.

Rather than discarding hate crime rhetoric altogether, Brandzel reminds us of the important ways in which community groups use such legislation as a means to critique the state itself. These groups strategically use the language and laws of hate crime to hold the state accountable as a central perpetrator of violence, so the “hate crime legislation is both a dangerous, yet valiant, response to the everyday experiences of violence” (p. 35). What she refers to as “comparative anti-intersectionality” is particularly helpful as a terminology (p. 63). This is a rhetorical maneuver which is deployed by actors across the political spectrum. One category of identity (usually race) is used to deny or demean another (usually sexuality or gender identity) by arguing that one of the categories is more worthy of inclusion within hate crime legislation than another. This way, by promoting competition for recognition, coalition strategies for radical transformation are prevented.

The second case study focuses on same-sex marriage rights. This was my least favorite chapter because her critique of either-or thinking stalls a bit here. She convincingly critiques claims of sameness, practices of normativity, and assimilation of same-sex marriage in a world that increasingly struggles over radicalized citizenship. Marriage remains a tool of governance, for sure, as Carole Pateman taught us regarding “the sexual contract.”^[1] In particular, marriage has never been separate from ethnic and racial hierarchies. Women’s citizenship was often linked to their marital status and their husbands’ racial identity. Benefiting from her intersectional approach, Brandzel gives the example of a 1888 law which “ensured Native women who married U.S. citizens would lose their tribal citizenship while being granted the ‘gift’ of U.S. citizenship” (p. 75). This chapter also gives a wonderful chronology of important legal cases surrounding the issue, revealing how the courts often equated sexual orientation to skin color and fixed racial discrimination as a “thing in the past” to ignore current violence. Thus, we are reminded that the recognition of same-sex marriage has come at a substantial cost of exacerbated violence targeting the poor and racial and ethnic minorities.

In this case study, however, we fail to see a fully developed “both/and” approach Brandzel advocates for. As communities appropriate hate crimes rhetoric to reveal state violence, is there no way for queers to strategically deploy the official recognition of same-sex marriage? Brandzel claims that same-sex marriage has severely wounded, if not eliminated, the monstrous queer; do we always have to depend on the “queer monstrosity” to disrupt normativity (p. 73)? Why limit “monstrosity” to queer communities? Can we not use this moment to reveal diversity within the institution of marriage in general—even the traditional kind, whatever that refers to? Is there only one type of straight marriage? Are not there monstrosities, or queerness, if you will, in the sense of strangeness or deviance, in what is assumed to be “normal”?

Second of all, are we being fair to the queer communities, which are as diverse as any other community, when we always expect monstrosity from them? The recent massacre in Orlando has shown how certain spaces are still considered to be sanctuaries by members of the LGBTQ communities and for good reasons. Can we not fight against normative citizenship while simultaneously celebrating the right to what straight people always take for granted? We know that hate crimes against LGBTQ people go up when there is a debate about the rights of LGBTQ people.