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Book Review

March 2025

Rodriguez, J. A. (2024). *Right to the road: How marginalized American motorists fought to drive and park*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

This book focuses on the effects of automobiles on the daily lives of ordinary American residents, especially marginalized and underserved communities, emphasizing the term mobility justice that promotes freedom of movement in public space, which has received little attention from previous researchers. The book presents an in-depth American historical background of parking and traffic policies, women's involvement in transportation-related jobs, social movements related to automobiles, and the roles of private vehicles for marginal Americans, such as immigrants, the homeless, the disabled, and people of color.

According to literature, cities' growth is shaped not only by markets, suppliers, and technology but also by transportation (Brueckner, 2011). Rodriguez's book supports this argument by focusing more on private vehicles' roles in urban and suburban lives and whether their presence supports or undermines city growth and sustainability. This book suits urban and transport researchers actively studying past and current mobility justice issues in the United States. It is also valuable for city and transportation planners who want to learn about urban parking history and development and how vehicles influence marginalized populations, as mentioned in each book chapter.

The first two chapters of this book begin with two case studies, each with a different historical urban development setting, showing municipal roles in issuing motor vehicle policies that prompted different city dwellers' responses. The first case study was in Milwaukee, where government leaders sought to redevelop the city's economy by regulating traffic and constructing multi-story parking garages. The second case study was in Chicago, where, in this developed area, the city's leaders were more focused on empowering the police to handle traffic congestion and parking problems. The third chapter discusses the beginning of meter maids, performed by white and black women, and the controversy among the public, including merchants, city officials, and motorists, about meter maids' roles compared to male police officers. The fourth chapter presents the marginalized people, especially Latino and European immigrants, correlated with their vehicles' roles. The fifth chapter discusses the history of the disability rights movement and the need for freedom of mobility for disabled people. The sixth chapter defines the histories and different reasons for automobile choices for some Americans, such as responses to housing crises, lifestyle choices, and preferences for safe parking in public lots and streets. Finally, the seventh chapter deals with how Americans creatively utilize automobiles in the current context, such as during COVID-19, and how cars support social protest movements.

Freedom and quality of movement are parts of mobility justice. Mobility justice is defined as an interdisciplinary approach to injustice that examines power and inequality's effects on mobilities, including governance systems, policies, vehicle reliance, and environmental problems (Harada, 2023). According to Sheller (2018), as cited by Bierbaum et al. (2021), mobility justice includes distributive justice that addresses opportunity access for all people, deliberative and procedural

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justice incorporates public engagement, restorative justice that addresses history, and epistemic justice that develops new knowledge to close gaps related to social inequality.

One of this book's novelties is that in all seven chapters, Rodriguez provides much inspiration for historical and little-known background stories about cars as a means of mobilization and residence for society, especially marginalized groups in America. The book presents the author's desire to seek opportunity, access and the rights for marginalized American communities for driving and parking. Each chapter has uniquely provided an in-depth explanation of each minority group's struggles related to their vehicles and how power correlates with and responds to these issues. It displays how marginalized American people's rights to travel are accommodated and regulated in the context of mobility justice. The author's writing offers broad social context commentary, showing how immigrants carve out their place in America while confronting the tensions between assimilation and cultural preservation.

Mobility justice research in the United States is making strides, but addressing the intersectional analysis gap that combines race, status, class, gender, age, disability, and other factors to understand how mobility issues affect every person or community differently is crucial for creating a more inclusive and equitable transportation system that benefits everyone, particularly those who have historically been left behind. Nevertheless, many studies still sidestep these issues and fail to capture these nuanced living experiences. Through his narrative, Rodriguez touches on the intersections of race, class, and gender and honestly examines what it means to be both part of and the outsider to the broader American context. The road symbolizes physical travel and the emotional and social journey of asserting people's identity in a complex society.

In addition, much mobility justice research focuses only on national or large-scale trends. However, mobility justice is often experienced locally, where different cities or regions may have unique transportation barriers and opportunities. Every chapter in this book profoundly explains more localized research to understand how policies, community engagement, and grassroots movements can drive change in selective urban areas. In the seventh chapter, the book talks about the COVID-19 pandemic that has fundamentally altered transportation patterns, such as more remote work, decreased use of public transit, and growth in cycling and walking. The explanation has opened the way for research to catch up on the long-term implications of these changes for mobility justice. How the pandemic has reshaped commuting and access to essential services for vulnerable groups, such as immigrants, people of color, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities, is an area that is still underexplored.

Although the content in this book is easy to understand, it would be better if some complex terms were explained in the terminology list for international readers. The hole in the author's arguments is focused intensely on Latinos and African Americans. This book would be better if all racial representatives, such as Asians and Native American backgrounds, were shown equally. This book would also be more vibrant if it explained current developments in transportation areas, such as shared mobility technology, like Lyft and Uber, and technology for autonomous vehicles, which have changed transportation systems and might influence marginalized and underserved American communities.

In summary, this book explores the marginalized American's experiences of searching for the freedom to drive and park. American cities should then establish measures to give these

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marginalized and underserved communities these rights. Policymakers should implement incentive programs to build infrastructure and better policies to address and accommodate the issues mentioned in the book.

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