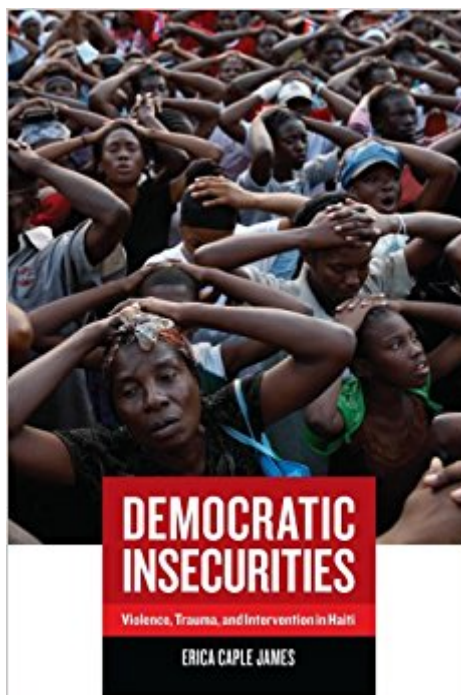




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Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, And Intervention In Haiti (California Series In Public Anthropology)



Synopsis

Democratic Insecurities focuses on the ethics of military and humanitarian intervention in Haiti during and after Haiti's 1991 coup. In this remarkable ethnography of violence, Erica Caple James explores the traumas of Haitian victims whose experiences were denied by U.S. officials and recognized only selectively by other humanitarian providers. Using vivid first-person accounts from women survivors, James raises important new questions about humanitarian aid, structural violence, and political insecurity. She discusses the politics of postconflict assistance to Haiti and the challenges of promoting democracy, human rights, and justice in societies that experience chronic insecurity. Similarly, she finds that efforts to promote political development and psychosocial rehabilitation may fail because of competition, strife, and corruption among the individuals and institutions that implement such initiatives.

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Customer Reviews

“Highly recommended. . . by highlighting the vivi first-person accounts of female survivors, the author raises important questions about humanitarian aid, structural violence, and political insecurity, while simultaneously outlining some of the ethical quandaries arising from the uses and abuses of power.” (Choice 2011-05-04)

“Her account is both brave and unsettling. . . . Not only instructive for anthropologists . . . but also for humanitarian aid providers who momentarily work or are planning to work in Haiti.” (Hanna Kienzler *Somatosphere*)

2011-05-22)“[This] is one of the most important books on the country published in years. . . . It radiates intelligence and understanding.” (Journal Of Sociology & Social Welfare 2011-09-14)

“Haiti’s catastrophic earthquake follows a decade of crisis in governance and in everyday social life. Erica James’s powerful ethnographic study shows how insecurity has been created, victimhood shaped, and trauma mediated under long-term conditions of grinding poverty punctuated by periodic disaster and interventions both external and domestic. The international and unintended consequences have commodified suffering, institutionalized insecurity, and fashioned a troubling and troubled democracy.” This book is a major achievement! Arthur Kleinman, author of *What Really Matters: Living a Moral Life amidst Uncertainty and Danger* “This is a remarkable piece of scholarship. Erica James has raised the bar as far as solid ethnographic inquiry in Haiti goes and draws on a diverse set of theoretical traditions in anthropology and in social theory. Her research will, I predict, open new doors.” Paul Farmer, Harvard University, founding director of Partners in Health “Erica James’ book is a vivid descent into the ordinary of violence and insecurity, of suffering and trauma, in a country that seems to have never completely recovered from past French exploitation and American imperialism. Based on an ethnography of neighborhoods as well as of aid agencies, the inquiry courageously questions our categories of thought and models of action to confront Haitian endless tragedies, from victimization to humanitarianism, bringing together, in an unprecedented analysis, what she calls the economies of terror and the economies of compassion.” Didier Fassin, author of *When Bodies Remember* “Democratic Insecurities is a work of extraordinary depth that sets new standards on the themes of violence and social suffering. The power of the book lies in the great attention to historical and ethnographic detail of Haitian society and politics through which the doing and undoing of violence is rendered knowable as well as its command over social theory.” Veena Das, Johns Hopkins University “James draws us in via an astonishingly vivid and unsettling account of her first weeks in Haiti. This book is a highly sophisticated, compelling, and instructive read and an outstanding example of ethnography by one of the leading anthropologists in the field of trauma.” Mary-Jo DelVecchio Good, Harvard University

Really helps you understand the complexities involved with NGOs.

Whether you work in humanitarian aid, or as an anthropologist....this is an important book which

uncovers some of the unintended consequences of intervention.

Amazing ethnography of NGOs, trauma and transitional States of violence . Directly informing my M.A. thesis on GBV in Guatemala.

very important analysis of the state of democracy in Haiti. very in depth portrayal of the state of violence in the society

This study focuses on the ethics of military and humanitarian intervention in Haiti following the 1991 coup. By highlighting vivid first-person accounts given by female survivors, James raises important questions about humanitarian aid, structural violence, and political insecurity, while simultaneously outlining some ethical quandaries arising from the uses and abuses of power. The author deftly charts the politics of post-conflict assistance to Haiti and chronicles challenges inherent in promoting democracy in the underdeveloped world. She found, for example, that efforts to promote political development and psychosocial rehabilitation often failed due to competition, strife, and corruption within the agencies charged with implementing such "rehabilitation." A persistent problem is that agencies cannot address problems of individual insecurity without reverting to the very practices that created such insecurities in the first place. There are no heroes in this book. Advocacy organizations, James concludes, appropriate the sufferings of others in order to solidify their own political and economic positions. Chapter five - which provides a detailed analysis of witchcraft, bureaucracy, and double binds engendered by the circulation of aid in Haiti -- is outstanding. But some readers may be repulsed by the sordid details. This is a disconcerting book. One comes away concluding that residents of Haiti have been ill-served by their government, by NGOs, by missionaries, and by the international community. Doubtless, this is exactly what the author intended. Recommended. Stephen D. Glazier, Professor of Anthropology, University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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