



# **The Ethnic Project: Transforming Racial Fiction into Ethnic Factions (Stanford Studies in Comparative Race and)**

*Vilna Bashi Treitler*

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Race is a known fiction—there is no genetic marker that indicates someone's race—yet the social stigma of race endures. In the United States, ethnicity is often positioned as a counterweight to race, and we celebrate our various hyphenated-American identities. But Vilna Bashi Treitler argues that we do so at a high cost: ethnic thinking simply perpetuates an underlying racism.

In *The Ethnic Project*, Bashi Treitler considers the ethnic history of the United States from the arrival of the English in North America through to the present day. Tracing the histories of immigrant and indigenous groups—Irish, Chinese, Italians, Jews, Native Americans, Mexicans, Afro-Caribbeans, and African Americans—she shows how each negotiates America's racial hierarchy, aiming to distance themselves from the bottom and align with the groups already at the top. But in pursuing these "ethnic projects" these groups implicitly accept and perpetuate a racial hierarchy, shoring up rather than dismantling race and racism. Ultimately, *The Ethnic Project* shows how dangerous ethnic thinking can be in a society that has not let go of racial thinking.

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