

Mayeri, Serena. *Reasoning from Race: Feminism, Law and the Civil Rights Revolution*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011.

In *Reasoning from Race* Serena Mayeri presents a history of the feminist movement through the legal strategy of the race-sex analogy. She argues that by employing this strategy, feminist lawyers were able to mimic the Civil Rights Movement's techniques and reap some of the same results. However, she also demonstrates that the relationship between the two was not always fruitful, and that in some circumstances the race-sex analogy was detrimental to the causes. Ultimately Mayeri explains that it is the inherent similarities between the Civil Rights and feminist movements that contributes to the effectiveness of the analogy in the earlier days of its use, and yet it is the institutional ignorance of the entire issue, as well as the political climate in the Nixon, Carter, and Reagan administrations that dealt crushing blows to the advances made using the strategy.

The organization of this book is chronological as it flows from the revival of the race-sex analogy to the end of the Civil Rights Era during the Reagan administration. Mayeri begins her examination of the feminist movement by focusing on the revival of the race-sex analogy by Pauli Murray. In detailing the establishment of Murray as a central figure in both the Civil Rights movements and the feminist movement, she argues that Murray's involvement in both allows her to be uniquely qualified to use the race-sex analogy. In particular it is her headstrong approach to bridge both movements that leads to the prevalence of the analogy in proceeding cases. Mayeri then proceeds to explain the proliferation of the race-sex analogy

in the next chapter. Here it is the effectiveness of the analogy that led to a closer relationship between the movements. Mayeri asserts this by emphasizing both the growing role of Pauli Murray as a definitive voice in the legal realm and the growing use of the race-sex analogy in ever-more important cases. Moving towards the mid 1970s, Mayeri adjusts the third chapter of this book to the effect that the shifting economic and political climate has on the legal proceedings of the period. Most importantly she focuses on how the growing discontent with the implementation of reforms is caused by the growing conservative movement. In reaction to the new climate of the decade, the feminist movement toned down its use of race-sex analogy in order to take up the strategy of proving disparate impact. Mayeri stresses that this shift is due to the growing distance between the two movements as the climate is proving too toxic for both to cohabitate the same core. "Lost Intersections" forwards the ineffectiveness of the race-sex analogy as Mayeri argues that the legal system began to commit an institutional ignorance of the full picture as the issues became compartmentalized in legal proceedings. In the late Civil Rights era there is a shift back towards the union of both movements as the Reagan administration began to assert its dominion over the court system. Mayeri contends that in reaction to growing antagonism the movement revisited old arguments and that in the final days of the Civil Rights era both of the prime movements reunited.

Serena Mayeri's argument in *Reasoning from Race* is well established by the use of court cases to chart the evolution of legal strategy. It is with

good tact that Mayeri weaves the narrative of the Civil Rights movement through the perspective provided by the abundance of court cases that reflect the context of American society. However, her reliance on these court cases limits the vantage point which the reader can view the issue. Her analysis ultimately couches the issues it is trying to represent, thus eliminating context that extends to the entire base of these movements.

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¹ The author, being also an editor, recused himself from the editing process regarding this article. It received no special treatment and was required to conform to all standard requirements.