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Review of *Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930* By Frank Van Nuys

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Americanizing the West: Race, Immigrants, and Citizenship, 1890-1930. By Frank Van Nuys. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002. xv + 294 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00 cloth.

Americanizing the West is an eloquently written account of Progressive reformers' concerted efforts to Americanize immigrants and ethnics in the American West, with a specific focus on the Mountain and Southwest regions, during

the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Americanization in the West was not a simple replica of similar efforts in the American East. In the West, Americanizers encountered a unique multicultural environment and the presence of ethnic groups who resided there well before the arrival of the first "Anglos" in the region. Euro-American pioneers pouring into the area during the second half of the nineteenth century increasingly interpreted the West as a "racial frontier" on which they attempted to create white dominance and supremacy over all other "races." To this end, they created a myth that portrayed the West as a manifestly "white country," the product of white pioneering and white pioneers who defined themselves as such vis-a-vis the "ethnic other."

In their attempts to make the mythical "white West" a reality, Westerners were on the forefront of lobbying for assimilationist programs and immigration restrictions for non-whites, resulting in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the "Gentlemen's Agreement" of 1907. The rhetoric of the "racial frontier," however, deemed many ethnic groups unassimilable. In his chapter on "Industrial Americanization," Van Nuys clearly demonstrates the contradictions between this racial rhetoric and the capitalist realities of Western economic development. Many Euro-Americans perceived the Mexican population of the Southwest as undesirable as well as unassimilable, at the same time realizing that they were necessary for the region's continued economic progress and development. As a consequence, the Americanization of Hispanics was primarily an attempt to integrate them into the evolving industrial order at the lowest possible level—to promote the capitalist integration of the West into the nation and not, as officially stated, "to make citizens of them." Though eventually Americanization failed as a program to make citizens of immigrants or Americans of ethnics, Van Nuys is able to demonstrate convincingly that it significantly contributed in integrating the American West into the national mainstream of a modernizing United States through furthering mechanisms of "bureaucratization, centralization, and standardization." In short, Americanization helped in making the West "American."

Several times this study contends that the reason for the failure of the Americanization program in the West was the widespread resistance of its objects who pursued their own agendas. Within this realm rests the study's major weakness. Like the Americanizers of the last century, van Nuys treats them as "objects." We learn little about their agendas, how they perceived Americanization, and how they specifically reacted to it. If Americanization contributed as much to making the West "American" as Van Nuys contends, then it would be crucial to learn much more about the groups and people who rejected these efforts because they undoubtedly were and are an integral part of the American West and its identity. Nevertheless, *Americanizing the West* is a valuable addition to the library.

ies of historians of immigration and the American West and further contributes to the arguments made for an anti-Turnerian interpretation of the West's position in American history. **Gerhard Grytz**, *Department of History, University of Texas at Brownsville*.