



The Specter of Sex: Gendered Foundations of Racial Formation in the United States

Sally L. Kitch

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Genealogy of the formation of race and gender hierarchies in the U.S.

Theories of intersectionality have fundamentally transformed how feminists and critical race scholars understand the relationship between race and gender, but are often limited in their focus on contemporary experiences of interlocking oppressions. In *The Specter of Sex*, Sally L. Kitch explores the “backstory” of intersectionality theory—the historical formation of the racial and gendered hierarchies that continue to structure U.S. culture today. Kitch uses a genealogical approach to explore how a world already divided by gender ideology became one simultaneously obsessed with judgmental ideas about race, starting in Europe and the English colonies in the late seventeenth century. Through an examination of religious, political, and scientific narratives, public policies and testimonies, laws, court cases, and newspaper accounts, *The Specter of Sex* provides a rare comparative study of the racial formation of five groups—American Indians, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and European whites—and reveals gendered patterns that have served white racial dominance and repeated themselves with variations over a two-hundred-year period.

Sally L. Kitch is Dean’s Distinguished Professor of Women and Gender Studies at Arizona State University. Her books include *Higher Ground: From Utopianism to Realism in American Feminist Thought and Theory*.

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