

Spring 5-1-2023

## Dreams in the New Century: Instant Cities Shattered Hopes and Florida's Turning Point

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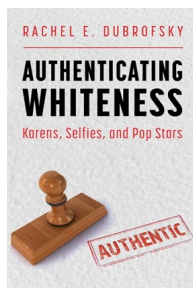
Jordan, Austina M. (2023) "Dreams in the New Century: Instant Cities Shattered Hopes and Florida's Turning Point," *The Southeastern Librarian*: Vol. 71: Iss. 1, Article 10.

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## REVIEWS

### ***Authenticating Whiteness: Karens, Selfies, and Pop Stars***



Rachel E. Dubrofsky  
Jackson: University Press  
of Mississippi, 2022  
ISBN: 9781496843326  
184 p. \$99.00 (Hbk)

*Authenticating Whiteness* provides a scholarly analysis of the

ways in which authenticity is portrayed as a strategy of whiteness in popular media sources. The author uses close readings of a wide variety of popular media types to show how authenticity—the quality of seeming spontaneous and unable to suppress one’s true feelings or emotions—is frequently portrayed in popular media as a positive trait of white people, particularly white women – a.k.a. Karens. Because authenticity is depicted as such an admirable quality, it can create sympathy in viewers that works to excuse or obscure the perception of any harm caused by the person’s behaviors—they might be seen, for example, as having been so overwhelmed by their emotions that they can’t be faulted for their actions, even when those actions were hurtful in serious, consequential ways.

Each chapter in the book focuses on analyzing examples of authenticity and how it works from a wide range of media sources, including musicians (Miley Cyrus and Taylor Swift), television series (UnReal), media coverage of Donald Trump, and examples drawn from viral internet content (a tweeted-out selfie, trending YouTube videos). The book also examines the pervasiveness of surveillance in culture, and the relationship between close scrutiny and authenticity. It asks questions about how authenticity works in a culture where so much of everyone’s lives are so often under some sort of surveillance, and looks at the performance of authenticity, where behavior that is seen by viewers as spontaneous may sometimes really be a carefully planned performance of au-

thenticity, created for an audience predisposed to value spontaneity and realism.

The author of the book, Rachel Dubrofsky, is a professor of Communication at the University of South Florida. She has published articles in Communication Studies journals including *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, *Surveillance & Society*, and *Communication Theory* and has also edited a book-length collection of essays, *Feminist Surveillance Studies*. Well-known for her scholarly expertise in reality television, she is frequently consulted by magazines and other media sites about topics related to the portrayal of gender and race on popular reality television shows. This book is a continuation of the research she has conducted throughout her career.

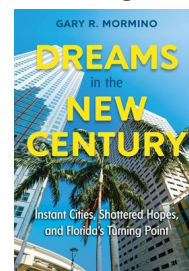
Although the book looks at popular topics like television shows and social media trends, it is a thoroughly academic study that is grounded in theory and well-documented. The topics are attention-getting, but the analysis is serious and asks important questions about who gets to be authentic, and why, and why the answers matter. The final chapter in the book examines how authenticity can get in the way of the work of antiracism, and how recognizing and addressing this problem is important.

Better suited for academic libraries because of its scholarly nature, this book would be a good addition to libraries with collections related to communication studies, media studies, and race relations. There are very few other books listed with the same set of subject headings in WorldCat at the time of this review, so this book should complement other works by adding a new consideration of these topics.

Allison Faix, Coastal Carolina University

### ***Dreams in the New Century: Instant Cities Shattered Hopes and Florida's Turning Point***

Gary R. Mormino  
Gainesville: University Press  
of Florida, 2022  
ISBN: 9780813069340  
548 p. \$34.95 (Hbk)



*Dreams in the New Century—Instant Cities, Shattered Hopes, and Florida's Turning Point* by Gary R. Mormino is a well-timed publication for those interested in understanding how 21st-century Florida developed over the first decade of the new century. With Hurricane Ian's devastation filling up today's newsfeeds, his work seems even more pressing as readers seek to understand Florida and its inhabitants. A retired historian, Dr. Mormino is the founder of the Florida Studies Program at the University of South Florida in St. Petersburg. His publications include several books about the varied history of the state of Florida.

The story picks up at the turn of the century, on the eve of the 2000 presidential election. The infamous hanging chad election and the subsequent US Supreme court case set the stage for Florida's rapid and drastic changes from then to now. *Dreams in the New Century*—is a mix of political, economic, environmental, and social history, providing an approachable text for the academic and the armchair historian. When people think about Florida, perhaps the two things that immediately come to mind are Walt Disney World and vacationing at the beach. What is particularly interesting about Mormino's text is along the way, you begin to recognize that Florida is a far more complex state than the oversimplified vision of existence for vacation and retirement.

While its focus centers on the first years of the century, 2000-2010, the author values the importance of readers knowing the decade does not exist in some vacuum. Instead, understanding the state's social, economic, and environmental history is necessary to contextualize the changes occurring during those years. Florida joined the union in 1845, seceded in 1861 during the Civil war, and rejoined the union, after restoration, in 1868. It is now the third most populous state in the union, with over 22 million residents. Most residents currently residing in the state were born elsewhere, having relocated to pursue the dream it offers.

The chapters walk through the decade year by year, offering the reader a narrative written in a timeline fashion. Explaining in detail the political dramas happening on the state and local levels while also giving careful attention is the significant ties of Florida's important role in national politics with each presidential election season. It is

hard to imagine Florida, having now lived through the first two decades of the twenty-first century, not maintaining a key place in the dialogue surrounding our national political landscape.

The portions of the book dedicated to Florida's environmental story make it plain that the state's biodiversity, climate forces, naturalists, and land developers are constantly driving the next steps for Florida's future preservation and development. Evidently, they are more often than not in conflict with one another and struggle to agree on how to coexist with agendas, clearly struggling to maintain control of the future before them. The author provides essential background on these often overlooked pieces of history while making the case that careful consideration of environmental impact is vital to the ongoing prosperity of the state.

The economic and social history included only strengthens the book's theme of Florida chasing dreams and progress that sometimes appears haphazard and driven purely by monetary motivations. With every story of a dream achieved, occasional nightmares cloud the picturesque vision of how people dream of chasing life in Florida see things. One such example is the housing crash at the tail end of the decade, upending countless resident's American dream. The author dedicates an entire chapter to that season, leaving readers to wonder if they are on the brink of history repeating itself.

At more than 500 pages, Mormino gives readers a carefully researched and inviting text, including over 50 pages of citations. He closes the final chapter posing the question, "What does it mean to be a Floridian?" Packed to the brim with meaningful context, backstory, and anecdotes, many might respond to the question with, "it depends." Highly recommended, this book helps enrich both academic and public library collections. Its value is not just in telling the story but in how it constructs the story, with its essential and varied evidence. Mormino, a skillful writer and historian, provides a narrative demonstrating that history is critical to understanding current events and can also be accessible to many audiences.

*Austina M. Jordan*, University of North Georgia