



Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery

By Bryan Wagner



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W. C. Handy waking up to the blues on a train platform, Buddy Bolden eavesdropping on the drums at Congo Square, John Lomax taking his phonograph recorder into a southern penitentiary? some foundational myths of the black vernacular remain inescapable, even as they come under increasing pressure from skeptics.

In *Disturbing the Peace*, Bryan Wagner revises the history of the black vernacular tradition and gives a new account of black culture by reading these myths in the context of the tradition's ongoing engagement with the law. Returning to some familiar examples (trickster tales, outlaw legends, blues lyrics) central to previous studies of the black vernacular expression, Wagner uses an analytic framework he has developed from the historical language of the law to give new and surprising analyses. Wagner's work draws both on his deep understanding of history and on a wealth of primary sources that range from novels to cartoons to popular ballads and early blues songs to newspapers and court reports. Through his innovative engagement with them, Wagner gives us a new and deeper understanding of black cultural expression, revealing its basis in the relational workings of African Americans in the social world.



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Editorial Review

Review

Bryan Wagner's *Disturbing the Peace* is a great book. I am enriched and fundamentally challenged by its erudition, its attention to detail and the force of its extremely powerful arguments. It is my sense that anyone working in black studies has to contend with this work--but not only that. Anyone who contends with this work will find their own work richer for having done so. (Fred Moten, Duke University)

An audacious and path-breaking history of legal terror... If the police power criminalized blacks in the New South, the invention of the vernacular tradition sugared over this onslaught of violence. Wagner exposes the fantasy of folklore. After *Disturbing the Peace*, it will be impossible to hear Leadbelly or read Uncle Remus without knowing what it means to market emphatic inequality as universal culture. (Colin Dayan, author of *The Story of Cruel and Unusual*)

About the Author

Bryan Wagner is Assistant Professor of English, University of California, Berkeley.

Users Review

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Araceli Burns:

Typically the book *Disturbing the Peace: Black Culture and the Police Power after Slavery* has a lot associated with on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of gain. The book was published by the very famous author. The author makes some research just before write this book. This specific book very easy to read you will get the point easily after scanning this book.

William Rocha:

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James Cummings:

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