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Neigh, Scott. 2012. *Resisting the State: Canadian History Through the Stories of Activists*. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing. ISBN 978-1-55266-520-6. Paperback: 24.95 CAD. Pages: 227.

Reviewed By Ted McCoy
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What is the value of dissent and resistance in Canadian history? In *Resisting the State*, Scott Neigh answers this question by suggesting that the history of activism and social movements can provide an alternative to conventional history that lionizes consent and consensus. Along with a companion book on gender and sexuality, the book offers stories of resistance constructed from the viewpoint of activists. Neigh suggests that these

stories speak about Canadian history with dissenting voices – viewpoints not represented in Heritage Minutes and government-published citizenship guides. He asks how history might be read if approached from the standpoint of the oppressed and powerless. While these questions will not be new to historians of the left, Neigh makes a valuable contribution by revealing aspects of the social history of Canadian activism and social movements that are personal and, at times, extremely moving.

Neigh's work is striking because it shows the deep personal connections between activists and their causes. The book is based upon oral-history interviews that Neigh conducted with fifty people drawn from a diverse group of long-time social activists. Each chapter explores the experiences of a key individual in social movements. These include anti-war pacifism, anti-racist and anti-colonialist movements, community and labour organizing, the anti-psychiatry movement, and anti-poverty human rights struggles. From this diverse list, Neigh makes interesting choices that will offer new insights to scholars in multiple fields. For example, Chapter 3 details indigenous resistance in Toronto and Winnipeg in the 1970s and 1980s, revealing a dimension of urban anti-colonial activism that is seldom considered alongside the history of government-Aboriginal relations in the twentieth century. Another fascinating chapter explores the anti-psychiatry movement in Toronto in the 1970s. This is interesting not only for what it uncovers about the sometimes mutually oppressive powers of medical science and the state, but also because resistance to psychiatry was a movement that dissipated and fractured after a decade of struggle. There are lessons here, and possibly lingering questions too. The harrowing experiences of the interview subjects incarcerated and treated against their will explains the rise of the anti-psychiatry movement and the need to investigate how the state is complicit in the abuses of medical power. We might also question why the movement faded and what this might say about how medicine, or any other professional or juridical power can supplant resistance and attain uncontested (or unearned) legitimacy.

My criticisms of the book are minor and relate to intent and scope. The book does not necessarily deliver what Neigh intends in the way of an alternative Canadian history. In reaching for this goal, however, Neigh is correct that Canadian history should include voices of dissent in moments other than the Riel Rebellion, Winnipeg in 1919 or Québec in 1970. The interviews he draws on reveal a more continuous social history of activism than those flashpoints illustrate alone. And although the book may overreach on its stated goal, it is perhaps too subtle about what it accomplishes on questions of resistance and the scope of individual struggle. Neigh focuses on how particular activists relate to the state, suggesting that these stories are materially connected through this common touchstone of power, oppression, and even banal bureaucracy. But as many of his subjects and Neigh himself argue throughout the book, there are other material connections at play that were also targets of resistance in the form of capitalism, racism, and gender inequality. This is the history of resistance to something more than the state,

a struggle for equality that reaches for something greater than what the state can possibly deliver.

The book is successful at demonstrating the value of resistance not just as a social relationship or an element of Canadian history, but as something that shapes an individual life. Neigh's work details the deeply personal reasons that people are drawn to activism and social protest. The interviews at the heart of this book personalize activism, and in the larger sense, the national history that envelops (and sometimes overcomes) activists. Neigh recovers these voices – and this is in itself a valuable activist project – and turns them to the larger task of speaking to Canadian history. In the process, the book also provides a varied vocabulary for how we talk about activism and what it means to be politicized. At times Neigh is self-conscious about the differences between his connection to activism compared to the role that struggle played in the lives of his subjects. Lynn Jones of Nova Scotia distilled this divide while reflecting on a lifetime of anti-racist organizing in Nova Scotia: 'you call it activism; I call it surviving' (107). Ultimately Neigh brings each set of interviews around to answering a bigger question – why people struggle as they do. The different answers emphasize the value of the activist history in Resisting the State.

Comack, Elizabeth. 2012. *Racialized Policing: Aboriginal People's Encounters With the Police*. Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing. ISBN 978-1-55266-475-9. Paperback: 22.95 CAD. Pages: 254.

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Elizabeth Comack's *Racialized Policing* arrives at a moment of heightened concern and awareness over the troubling relationship between Aboriginal people and police forces across Canada. The issue reached a crisis point in early 2013 with international pressure from Human Rights Watch over RCMP abuse of Aboriginal women. These demands proliferate amidst ongoing calls for a national inquiry into missing or murdered women from Aboriginal communities across Canada. These issues also are being folded into the growing Idle No More movement which presents a timely opportunity to focus anti-colonial protest on problems of race in policing and criminal justice. Comack's research serves as a valuable primer for this project. The book convincingly argues that policing in Canada is inherently racialized – understood as the manner in which racism infiltrates policing, and in turn, racializes First Nations people.