

[the president] was not a true Fijian” (117).

Considering her observations, it is somewhat disappointing that Brison does not explore the implications of conducting her interviews in English (see 93n1). Because English is the language of education and internationalism, it is configured, to some extent, as a language of critique; by interviewing women in English, Brison may have helped set the women’s stances as critical observers who would aspire to certain ideologically “non-Fijian” ideals. For example, she mentions how one woman frames the story of her marriage in terms of romantic love even though she had been pressured into marrying a man she barely knew. Brison concludes, “Sera’s attempt to construe her marriage as one based on love and caring reveals the importance of these ideas for her” (79). It is equally likely, I suggest, that her story is a product of her understandings of the sentiments that English is used to communicate.

One of the book’s strengths is Brison’s sense of balance: she emphasizes the fact that individual experiences vary widely while she also acknowledges that “most rural indigenous Fijians are distinctly stuck in one place and have limited possibilities for re-imagining identity in an environment that makes autonomy difficult and keeps people dependent on bonds of kinship and village” (137). She also avoids jargon, and makes abstract issues of tradition, modernity, and personhood accessible through the use of vivid life histories. For these reasons, *Our Wealth Is Loving Each Other* is an ideal introductory text for many

anthropology students and a welcome contribution to the ethnography of Fiji.

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Grassroots, Ceux qui votent. DVD, 85 minutes, color, 2007. Director: Éric Wittersheim. Producers: Éric Wittersheim and David Quesemand, with support from the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, and the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. Languages: Bislama and French, with subtitles in Bislama, French, English, and Spanish. Distributor: Association Philux. Information for ordering can be obtained at <http://philux.org/DVD/grassroots.html>. €15.00.

Throughout the past two decades a growing number of scholars have explored the complex interplay between emerging state structures, local senses of belonging, and concepts of national leadership that have informed the postcolonial history of Vanuatu. A recent addition to this roster is French anthropologist Éric Wittersheim, whose research about postcolonial politics and anthropological representation in Vanuatu and Kanaky (New Caledonia) first began to appear in the late 1990s and stresses the importance of approaching the apparent contradictions of Melanesian political systems as normal and inherent to local engagements with universalist models of governance.

With the presentation of his first documentary film, the subtitle of which translates as *Those Who Vote*,

Wittersheim offers a timely and impassioned exploration of electoral politics in Vanuatu. The film, which received the Prix du Jury at the 2004 International Oceanic Film Festival in Tahiti and has circulated widely in the Pacific Islands, lays bare some of the processes that inform the contestation of political authority and representation in and around Port Vila, the capital of Vanuatu. The backdrop for the film was the 2002 presidential campaign, during which the emergence of new political parties exemplified the growing plurality of Vanuatu's electoral landscape, which had hitherto been dominated by two parties with historical ties to the period of independence—the anglophone Vanua'aku Pati (VP), and the francophone Union de Parties Modérés (UPM, also UMP). In this respect, *Grassroots* is of great value to Vanuatu scholars and, more generally, to political analysts with an interest in comparative discussion.

While he chose the 2002 election as an organizing theme, Wittersheim privileged the viewpoints, strategies, and activities of the National Community Association (NCA), a newly constituted political party, which gave voice to the hitherto neglected peri-urban communities that straddle Port Vila. These are notoriously marginalized areas inhabited by disaffected and largely disenfranchised economic migrants who retain varying degrees of attachment to their communities of origin and are perceived as irrelevant voters—or simply undesirable—by mainstream politicians. The greatest value of Wittersheim's documentary resides in the unique insight that it provides into the quotidian problems, desires and expressions of this grow-

ing, proletarianized, and oft-ignored sector of Vanuatu's population.

The overall story line is built around the campaign strategy and community-centered (hence “grass-roots”) rhetoric of NCA leader Sabi Natonga. By the time of the 2002 elections Natonga was already a well-known figure in Port Vila, having first acquired notoriety as a professional boxer, soccer player, and coach; while still in his prime he retired from sports to become a successful businessman as branch manager of Bon Marché, an upscale supermarket franchise in Vila. As a representative of the majority Tannese community who inhabit the impoverished settlement of Blacksands, Natonga had achieved an uncommon degree of success and quickly seized on the potential leadership role that electoral politics offered. Having infused his immediate supporters—most notably the Tannese chief and apparent kinsman, Roy Yasul—with a sense of political direction, Natonga reached out to disaffected constituencies around Port Vila and the various provinces.

What is truly remarkable about *Grassroots*—and became the motivation for its tragic story line—is the unprecedented receptivity shown by otherwise different periurban and provincial communities to Natonga's unifying discourse of popular representation. In the end, their enthusiasm proved insufficient—as viewers discover toward the end of the film, when they are treated to the dramatic denouement of election night and the NCA failure to secure a single seat within the National Parliament. (However, the party proved its worth during recent electoral processes when

it finally obtained parliamentary representation.)

In addition to its focus on the National Community Association, the film presents various vignettes regarding the campaign strategies of two other parliamentary contenders. They are Alick George Noël, a UMP incumbent who lost his seat during the 2002 election, and Marie-Noëlle Patterson, a Vanuatu citizen of French ancestry who, during previous stints as Ombudswoman and representative for Transparency International, became notorious for her uncompromising and sometimes single-minded denunciation of corrupt practices. As portrayed with slight irony in the film, Patterson ran an unsuccessful campaign based on constant radio broadcasts and a moralizing discourse peppered with shrill injunctions for ni-Vanuatu to do more to attract foreign investment.

However, it is clear from the start that Natonga and his National Community Association are the main focus of Wittersheim's interest, and the greatest strength of the documentary lies in its ability to capture the growing fervor that built up around Natonga's supporters, who are accurately, if somewhat romantically, portrayed as the underdogs. The climax of the film occurs during a memorable sequence in which NCA supporters, led by Natonga, and a UMP-VP coalition rally, led by Alick George Noël, briefly faced off during a serendipitous encounter in downtown Vila. Interestingly, the negative characterizations that George Noël proffered through his blaring megaphone (referring to the NCA as the "National Chinese Association," thereby implying that Natonga was in thrall to obscure

foreign interests) provided an irresistible, if somewhat lopsided, caricature of the mudslinging to which Vanuatu's old guard would presumably stoop in order to secure their continuity.

In sum, *Grassroots* offers a unique perspective on the electoral dynamics of Vanuatu and a highly effective and welcome (although not unprecedented: recall the Young People's Project organized by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre in the late 1990s) medium for the expressions of the ordinary people of Blacksands. Nevertheless, it is not free of shortcomings.

Foremost is a slightly disjointed quality to the film's editorial structure and continuity. When coupled with a lack of background information regarding the personalities, parties, and essentials of the political system, this can render the portrayal of rival candidates slightly confusing to those unfamiliar with Vanuatu (as I myself have observed after showing the film to various audiences). The first impression of a nonspecialist may therefore be of a slightly extended documentary about a selfless "people's candidate" struggling against an ominous but unknown political machine. Clearly, this depiction hardly accounts for Natonga's complex motives and political maneuvering. Of greater concern is the fact that the film does nothing to explain why an overwhelming majority of mature and intelligent ni-Vanuatu electors cast their ballots in favor of purportedly self-serving, outdated, and undesirable leaders. Hence, critical issues such as collective voting patterns, concepts of legitimate authority and Vanuatu's unique system of proportional representation are unfortunately elided.

In a highly lucid interview offered as part of the extras, Wittersheim self-critically notes that his sympathetic portrayal of the NCA was probably influenced by a form of “Stockholm Syndrome,” which motivated him to be captivated by the sentiments and aspirations of his subjects. It is only fair to mention that Wittersheim went to great pains to include a minimal chronology of events and contexts prior to the opening credits, as well as providing a list of key events in Vanuatu’s history in the extras. He was also courageous in deciding to include an extended interview with a French political scientist who proffers a stimulating critique of the film’s content and style. Finally, it is to be celebrated that great care was taken to provide subtitles in four different languages in an effort to make the film accessible to as broad a public as possible. These added features, in combination with its topical originality, render *Grassroots* an indispensable and satisfying addition to the audiovisual record on contemporary Vanuatu.

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Half-Lives and Half-Truths: Confronting the Radioactive Legacies of the Cold War, edited by Barbara Rose Johnston. Santa Fe, NM: School for Advanced Research Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1-930618-82-4; x + 326 pages, tables, figures, maps, notes, references, index. US\$27.95.

While the nuclear era began with the development and use of atomic weapons by the United States near

the end of World War II, the focus of this volume is the ensuing cold war between the United States and the former Soviet Union. The book’s thirteen chapters are authored or coauthored by fifteen anthropologists, most of whom have studied the culture and history of science, documented the legacy of the cold war, and conducted research with the aim to assist communities harmed by the arms race.

The chapter by editor Barbara Rose Johnston, “Half-Lives, Half-Truths, and Other Radioactive Legacies of the Cold War,” introduces the volume. While several nations are known to have nuclear weapons (including China, France, India, Israel, Pakistan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States), others have the technical capacity to develop them. Drawing on the nuclear history of the United States and the Soviet Union, Johnston makes several observations that are of general relevance. The nuclear programs of both nations have had and continue to have devastating consequences for the peoples involved. Uranium mining and processing, weapon production facilities, the testing of nuclear weapons, and nuclear waste dumps have created “radiogenic communities.” Such communities suffer from unseen dangers of radiological contamination, which result in an increased incidence of a variety of cancers and other illnesses, miscarriages, births of congenitally deformed children, difficulties of caring for disabled children, and cause people to live with fear and anxiety over intergenerational and other long-term and unknown effects of radiation.

Johnston notes that the ability of communities to comprehend, con-