

## We're Still Here: Pain and Politics in the Heart of America

**Jennifer M. Silva**

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Jennifer M. Silva's *We're Still Here* is insightful, thoughtful, and necessary for anyone trying to understand contemporary American politics, especially in the wake of the 2016 election. It contains a wealth of information, stories, and theories about a critical voting group in the United States: the working class.

In the depreciating town of Coal Brook, Pennsylvania (name changed for anonymity), working-class men and women face disheartening circumstances. Physical and emotional pain, financial instability, and political distrust run rampant, directly affecting their politics and actions. Silva, a sociologist, interviewed a substantial selection of Coal Brook residents, absorbing and communicating their histories, struggles, and the way their circumstances influenced their votes in 2016.

While *We're Still Here's* quality prose and engaging structure hold interest, its tender, deep dive into people's lives is what makes the book spectacular. Silva collects bleak anecdotes from the people of Coal Brook, illuminating the constant suffering that occurs in areas like it, where people can't afford medication for chronic illnesses, veterans suffer from untreated PTSD, and demoralizing labor dominates lives. Rather than attack the community, many of whom voted for Trump or otherwise express problematic views, Silva engages it, treating its people as people instead of political research subjects. The result is a particularly thoughtful, enlightening study that sheds light on today's perplexing political realities.

Silva strays from other mainstream work about white working class America to unravel the complexities of race in places like Coal Brook, making sure to give voice to marginalized identities in her narratives. *We're Still Here* combines sociological theory and intimate, personal research for a revealing look at the heartbreak in one of America's forgotten communities.

MYA ALEXICE (July/August 2019)

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