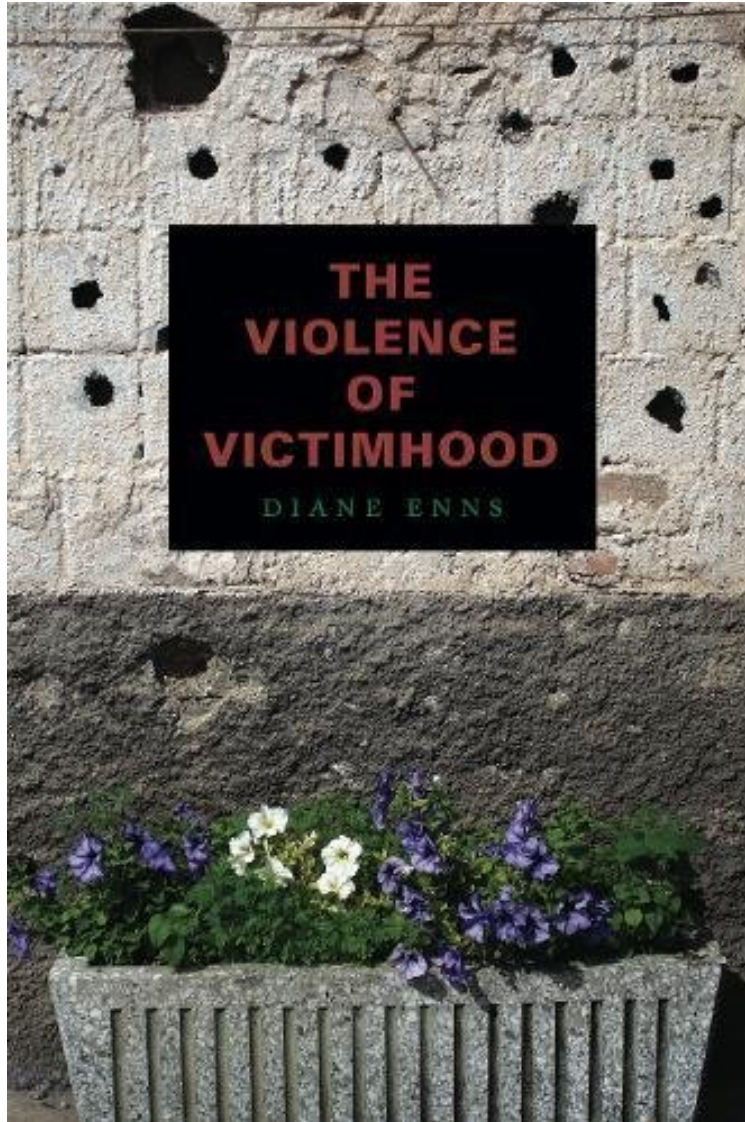


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The Violence of Victimhood

Diane Enns

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Diane Enns : The Violence of Victimhood before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Violence of Victimhood:

We know that violence breeds violence. We need look no further than the wars in the western Balkans, the genocide in Rwanda, or the ongoing crisis in Israel and Palestine. But we dont know how to deal with the messy moral and

political quandaries that result when victims become perpetrators. When the line between guilt and innocence wavers and we are confronted by the suffering of the victim who turns to violence, judgment may give way to moral relativism or liberal tolerance, compassion to a pity that denies culpability. This is the point of departure in *The Violence of Victimhood* and the impetus for its call for renewed considerations of responsibility, judgment, compassion, and nonviolent politics. To address her provocative questions, Diane Enns draws on an unusually wide-ranging cast of characters from the fields of feminism, philosophy, peacebuilding, political theory, and psychoanalysis. In the process, she makes an original contribution to each, enriching discussions that are otherwise constricted by disciplinary boundaries and an arid distinction between theory and practice.

Diane Enns's book *The Violence of Victimhood* will be read with admiration and a passionate interest by anyone who confronts the moral, philosophical, and political dilemmas of extreme violence in contemporary society: scholars, activists, citizens. Instead of simply naming the ambivalence of the category of victimhood, she wants to understand it in all its determinations, moral and historical. She confronts with great rigor an impressive corpus of interpretations, past and present, Western and postcolonial. She delineates a politics of life with no concession to wishful thinking. A most necessary, most timely book. Etienne Balibar, University of California, Irvine Diane Enns powerfully shows how easily we can lapse into misleading and dangerous assumptions about the entitlements and authority of victims. While seeking to respect and repair the victims of violence, we may defer too much, with damaging consequences. This beautifully written and thoughtful book poses central questions about conflict and its aftermath. Trudy Govier, University of Lethbridge *The Violence of Victimhood* is original in its question and extremely well researched. The discussion of widely held and largely unexamined claims regarding the moral status of the other, of trauma, of victims, of powerlessness, and so on is very fresh and insightful. . . . The breadth and depth of the research is astounding. Diane Enns knows all the secondary literature and brings it fruitfully to bear without losing her own original voice. Peg Birmingham, DePaul University The most original feature of this book . . . is the way that Diane Enns interprets and uses Arendt's writings on judgment and violence as a corrective to some of the secondary literature in the continental tradition. Furthermore, her careful reading of Fanon indicates both the weaknesses of some of his writings (and interpretations of it) and his own criticism of "counter-violence" as a political theory. Enns applies this body of literature to the analysis of civil war and genocide, in particular the problem of child soldiers, and her treatment of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is excellent, revealing the limitations of the dominant thematizations of the violence that has defined it. Stephen Esquith, Michigan State University This is an important book. It is an urgent book. In language at once analytic and passionate, Diane Enns confronts the cult of otherness without denying the truths to which it points and substitutes for it a universal ethic of nonviolent action, without denying the complexities it involves. For those seeking building blocks for solidarity in our age, *The Violence of Victimhood* is an essential read. Todd May, Clemson University About the Author Diane Enns is Associate Professor of Philosophy at McMaster University.