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Mullings, Leith., ed. *Cities of the United States: Studies in Urban Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987. Pp. xii, 342. \$40.00 (US).

Almost a century ago reformers inaugurated the Progressive Era by attacking the evils of the American city: poverty, pollution, slums, overcrowding, and crime. Today we are still concerned with these same problems. *Cities of the United States* presents a series of articles that examine various topics, including the urban poor, community organization, education, kinship, and gender. According to its editor, Leith Mullings, "this is the first volume of original essays to deal exclusively with the urban United States."

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson tried to stem the dangerous deterioration of urban America in the 1960s by waging a War on Poverty that poured huge sums of money into programs aimed chiefly at inner cities. Whatever success this scheme achieved, it fell short of original expectations. Ronald Reagan drastically cut federal urban aid and transferred much of the responsibility for welfare to state and local communities, most of which could not maintain the previous level of services. Blacks and Hispanics suffered considerably from this new economy drive.

What are the best methods for improving the nation's metropolitan centres? At one time public assistance promised some hope but, as Jagna Sharff points out in her article on the urban poor, many who seek aid today find that assistance levels are "grossly inadequate." In order to survive, the poor are often forced to supplement their income by underground activities such as stealing, pushing drugs, and operating illegal lotteries. In their analysis of "The Welfare Trap," Ida Susser and John Kreniske confirm that Reaganomics has led to a system in which welfare agents pursue long and tedious procedures and enforce excessive and unreasonable rules for the purpose of denying aid to clients. "Welfare regulations

are not designed to assist poor people," the authors conclude, "they are intended to discourage them from requesting relief."

If public assistance has demonstrable weaknesses, how effective is local community action? An alliance between blacks and Italians in Newark, New Jersey, Gwendolyn Mikell reveals, allowed middle-class representatives of these groups to move into the city's power structure, but it accomplished nothing for the urban poor. Delmos Jones discovered that when a grass-roots Community Action Group in New York City tried to operate a Head Start educational program, it fell increasingly under the control of higher level city institutions. Centralized bureaucracy made the rules, controlled the funds, appointed the staff, and overrode the wishes of local citizens.

Has either education or the women's liberation movement exerted a salutary influence on urban affairs? A study by anthropologist John Ogbu reports that children of low-income black and Chicanos in South Stockton, California, consistently performed worse in school than any other group. Neither genetic nor cultural factors explained this phenomenon. Blacks and Chicanos, long subject to racial prejudice, simply saw little evidence that for them better education necessarily led to better economic opportunities. A great increase in the number of women entering the work-force, Helen Safa's essay reveals, has not particularly benefited the urban working woman. Although middle-class women enjoyed a wide range of employment choices, most of which promised upward mobility, women of the labouring class had to settle for low-paying dead-end jobs. Some working women experienced a new sense of independence, but their wages served only to supplement to the incomes of their husbands who remained the main bread-winners and the major household authorities.

Despite its main title, this book does not present a comprehensive view of the

American city. It is a collection of articles loosely connected by a common concern for urban issues. Some essays, while meritorious in themselves, bear only a peripheral relationship to the major topic of the study. Benjamin Miller's examination of the polo club as a status symbol and a weapon of the upper class is fascinating and well written, but it seems anomalous in a volume otherwise devoted to the urban poor. Some articles deal almost exclusively with anthropological research methods and theories. These topics may interest professionals in the field but their place in a work ostensibly dedicated to the American city appears questionable. If both the spending of Kennedy and Johnson and the parsimony of Reagan have failed, how then do we save American cities from becoming nothing more than desperate ghettos for the undereducated, underemployed, homeless, and criminal? Our authors provide no suggestions. Readers are left with a fragmented image tinged with pessimism. Short on solutions, the book nevertheless performs a valuable service by highlighting a major problem in America today.

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Bauman, John F. *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987. Pp. xvi, 278. Maps, index.

Goering, John M., ed., *Housing Desegregation and Federal Policy*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986. Pp. x, 343, Tables, maps, index.

The discovery of an emergent urban "underclass" characterized by minority status, poverty, and an immobility that leaves it stranded in our economically debilitated central cities is grave testimony to the intractability of racial and class inequality in

the United States. As the American civil rights movement shifts its attention from the south to the Metropolis, the inner-city poor have seized the attention of social thinkers with a force not seen since the last smouldering embers of the 1960s illuminated the urban core. John F. Bauman's *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974* and John M. Goering's edited collection, *Housing Desegregation and Federal Policy*, focus on the spatial dimension of this problem and link public policy to the dogged persistence of residential segregation.

For Goering, who was for six years a program manager at HUD, the "desegregation of housing for minorities still appears as one of America's most unsettled civil rights frontiers." The problem is being aggravated, he argues, as racial isolation is compounded by the black community's accelerating segregation by class. Blacks encounter prejudice because they are black and because they are poor. Bauman ably provides some much needed historical perspective to the relationship between racism and housing. Although he acknowledges that the growing black middle class and its relationship to the private housing market deserve scholarly attention, he focuses his own study on poor blacks in the inner city and, particularly, on the attempt made over the last half-century to ameliorate their deplorable living conditions.

In tracing the evolution of public housing in Philadelphia from its inception to its "exhaustion" in the 1970s, Bauman details what is becoming a distressingly familiar tale. The seeds of this devolution can be found in the program's origins, which saw the reform community split between housing "professionals," who favored restrictive legislation and market incentives, and "communitarians," who were influenced by collectivist European models of public housing. Intellectual "jousting" throughout the Depression produced a sort of "philosophical schizophrenia" that weakened the

consensual foundation that supported public housing.

During the war an "overly cautious" federal bureaucracy's "obsession with privatism" (the language reveals the author's own preferences) led to a response to housing needs that was inadequate and that reinforced prevailing patterns of segregation. The national acquiescence to both localism and privatism assured that the process of ghettoization not only went unchecked, but was actually sustained by public sanction and funds. Ideological shifts and a subsequent loss of reforming zeal after World War II permitted a redefinition of public housing's mission as developers transformed it into a "handmaiden" for urban renewal. Massive resistance to integration in Philadelphia's white neighbourhoods guaranteed that the projects would become mere holding tanks and the vehicles for the delivery of social services to the concentrated minority poor.

Bauman's argument is based on rich archival sources. Reflecting the nature of those sources, the book is particularly strong in detailing the housing reformers' perspectives and activities. His insightful conclusions regarding the influence of local authorities and the private sector, however, are clear indications that the failure of public housing should not be discussed primarily in terms of the internal contradictions and weaknesses of its proponents. Overwhelming external constraints, particularly the nature of the local political landscape, the neighbourhoods, and Philadelphia's business community, are mentioned but do not receive the detailed attention that they need if the problem is to be understood in its entirety.

Goering's collection focuses on more recent events and covers both federal efforts to police the private market and government programs themselves. Several contributions make it clear that discrimination persists and that segregation has remained impervious to

fair housing legislation. The Fair Housing Act of 1968, which mandated the pursuit of integrated communities through the practice of non-discrimination, has certainly failed to produce the former or guarantee the latter. In fact, the current conservative political climate and federal retrenchment have apparently transformed non-discrimination and integration into conflicting, rather than complementary, objectives.

The present dilemma is outlined in stark terms. In pushing the case for integration, essays by Gary Orfield and Alexander Polikoff argue that policies of non-discrimination alone are not sufficient to produce stable, mixed communities; that equality cannot exist in a racially segregated society; and that government must intervene to break the cycle of ghettoization. Wilhelmina A. Leigh and James D. McGhee, writing on behalf of the National Urban League, argue for access to quality housing and against race-conscious remedies that burden blacks or deny their individual rights. They caution, however, against the possibly undesirable political and social consequences of breaking up black concentrations.

The obvious lack of consensus, perhaps analogous to that found by Bauman for an earlier era, does not highlight the external opposition hostile to both groups of "reformers." It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the federal policies described in the Goering volume lack a consistent sense of purpose and are characterized by confusion and considerable wrangling over definitions and regulations of dubious effect.

Unfortunately, the essays on public attitudes and proposed solutions offer little cause for optimism. The survey data suggest little prospect of change: whites reject implementation of fair housing proposals and only a minority would accept residence in an integrated neighbourhood — and then only if they remained a substantial majority. Even encouraging talk of progressive "trends" in

white attitudes seems hollow when, on the 40th anniversary of *Shelley Kraemer*, we are left asking: How long to achieve what? The search for a magical prescription that would lend stability to mixed communities, given the contradictory, impractical, and otherwise questionable suggestions put forward here, seems similarly fruitless. In sum, the Goering collection offers provocative essays of varying insight and perspective, a stimulating look at the confusion and disarray currently plaguing fair housing advocates, and little hope for the immediate future.

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Fishman, Robert. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*. New York: Basic Books, 1987. Pp. xii, 241. Illustrations. \$19.95 (U.S.).

Gale, Dennis E. *Washington, D.C.: Inner-City Revitalization and Minority Suburbanization*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988. Pp. xvi, 238. Maps and tables. \$34.95 (U.S.).

As Robert Fishman demonstrates, suburbanization is not a recent phenomenon. In *Bourgeois Utopias* he illuminates its late 18th-century English origins and then traces its evolution to the present, concluding with Los Angeles as its culmination. Dennis Gales, in *Washington, D.C.*, studies one city's patterns of "inner-city revitalization" as well as suburbanization from the late 1960s through the mid-eighties. Though Gale sees suburbanization as a continuing phenomenon, Fishman finds that it is ending and that a "new perimeter city," the "technoburb," is taking its place.

Fishman and Gale have crafted very different kinds of books. Fishman has produced a beautifully written and highly interpretative account of the Anglo-American bourgeoisie and its quest to create family-centred

residences in park-like settings away from urban workplaces and the working class. Approaching its subject from a different direction than Kenneth Jackson's history of suburbanization, *Crabgrass Frontier*, Fishman's work focuses on cultural transmission from England as an important factor in the development of suburbs in America. Thus he devotes much space to the "English precedents" which inspired such "American voices" of suburbanization as Catharine Beecher, Andrew Jackson Downing, and Calvert Vaux. In particular he cites England's "Evangelical domestic theology and the picturesque tradition of style." He also engages in extended discussions of such prototypical English suburbs as Clapham, Park Village, and Victoria Park.

Bourgeois Utopias offers insights into the middle class of several cities. It begins with the merchants of London, "the world city of the eighteenth century." Their "growing repulsion" toward their "city of commerce and small shops" helped drive them to its outskirts. Then there was Manchester, the classic industrial city with workers' housing surrounding an industrial core and the middle class in flight to rural land at its periphery. On the other hand, in France the bourgeoisie of Paris flocked to the centre of their city when it was reconstructed by Louis Napoleon and Baron Eugène-Georges Haussmann. They sought to occupy new, luxury apartment houses along broad boulevards created by cutting through existing streets and razing structures standing in the way. There the working class wound up in suburbs surrounding the bourgeoisie in the city. Following the English example, in America the middle class of industrial Philadelphia sought rural property. As rail transportation was convenient, suburbanites could commute to and from residences far from native workers and European immigrants. "Virtually unhampered by previous traditions and settlements," the middle class of Los Angeles, wedded to the automobile, a freeway system, and the single family house,

created a "suburban metropolis." The "detached suburban house" became "the central element in the structure of the whole city."

Much narrower than Robert Fishman in his scope and more statistical in his approach, Dennis Gale addresses the complexities of race and demography in studying Washington, D.C. With a dozen maps and twenty-three tables to support a highly factual text, his book cannot be read quickly. Examined carefully it may be regarded as an important study of a significant city, and it may indeed be valuable for understanding and anticipating developments in comparable urban areas.

Washington, D.C. examines the capital of the United States in the aftermath of the urban riots of the 1960s, and finds it to be a changed place. Beyond the era of the Great Society's programs and caught in the current of private market forces in the 1970s, the city demonstrated considerable resiliency and experienced a revival. The decline of its mainly black inner core was reversed, and blacks made a significant move into its inner suburbs, though they could not change the character of the "largely white and middle-class outer suburban ring."

Gale's study is of blacks and whites often in motion and sometimes in dispute. Their moves frequently seemed to be according to age and class. For example, the revitalization of downtown Washington in the 1970s, which offered numerous "middle- and upper-class opportunities," was marked by the immigration of relatively young and affluent whites who offset the out-migration of less affluent blacks. As Gale observes, class disparities "often take on racial dimensions."

Politics and public education were additional factors affecting migration and racial interaction. Conflicting attitudes in these areas generated division in both the city of Washington and its Virginia and Maryland suburban counties. The voter registration