



Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Protest and Prejudice: A Study of Belief in the Black Community*. by Gary T. Marx

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peatedly asserted that rather than overthrowing our society, they were seeking only the fulfillment of the American Dream. But in the late 1960's, after grudging tokenism proved to be the response of many whites to the Negroes' demands, black revolutionaries preached insurrection and threatened to destroy America. In this "pessimistic" book, Professor Killian declares that white armed power will make a successful revolution impossible, but he warns that the frustrated blacks may attempt a race war regardless of the consequences.

Killian analyzes the rising desperation of Negroes as the shortcomings of NAACP legalism produced nonviolent direct action. Although Martin Luther King assumed a prophetic role in the late 1950's, the Negro protest movement in the succeeding decade came to rely less on loving persuasion and more on a power-orientation. Since demonstrations produced only minor concessions and limited victories, Negro activists became increasingly hostile to the national as well as state and local governments. As Killian views the process, "the rule of the moderates" was responsible for the Economic Opportunity Act, but such federal legislation hardly touched millions of the black poor. Their alienation has been demonstrated by recent long hot summers and the slogan, "Black Power."

While organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League would have prevented the riots if they could, their post-riot explanations seemed in effect to condone the racial violence. Killian argues that because of this response, the riots are now part of the mainstream of the Negro protest movement. For some civil rights organizations, the riots have become a cautionary tale; for Killian, they may well be a prelude to revolution. He warns that without a multi-billion dollar compensatory program for the blacks, America faces organized rebellion complete with widespread sabotage and urban guerilla tactics.

This book is provocative and will deservedly receive widespread attention. Time will determine how real is the danger of the cataclysm which the author fears. However, this reviewer does not agree that white America faces an armed black revolution. No doubt for years ahead there will be riots in which Negroes will continue to be the chief victims. To keep the lid on, federal expenditures for the ghetto will increase, but to nowhere near the level which the black militants demand. And yet our society will likely muddle along, with Black Power functioning as a strident but largely peaceful accommodation to White Power. To this reviewer, the talk of black rebellion functions as a substitute for organized revolutionary activity. Nevertheless, whatever the future holds in the

next few years, *The Impossible Revolution?* is indispensable for understanding it.

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Protest and Prejudice: A Study of Belief in the Black Community. By GARY T. MARX. New York: Harper and Row, 1968. xxxviii, 228 pp. \$8.95.

The sociologist who undertakes to publish an up-to-date analysis of contemporary race relations risks having his work turned into history by the breathtaking pace of change in the situation. Gary Marx has studied the basic orientation of Negroes in the United States to the civil rights struggle, toward themselves, and towards whites, on the basis of interviews conducted by NORC in late 1964.

In his preface the author acknowledges that important changes did take place in the civil rights struggle between the time of the interviews and the date of publication. Nevertheless, he contends that his conclusions about beliefs in the black community are still valid for two reasons. One is that the survey was concerned with basic orientations of Negroes and not with single issues. Secondly, he feels that the factors that shaped the Negro responses in 1964 are still relevant.

Today a large number of readers will be surprised at his conclusion that many people hold an overly sensational image of the Negro mood. This overall conclusion is based on several specific findings which add up to a generally optimistic picture. While there is deep anger and frustration in the Negro population, there is, according to this study, a general optimism about the possibility of change within the existing social system. Most Negroes favor integration rather than any form of separatism, and most are loyal to the United States. The majority are opposed to indiscriminate violence. Negroes are not consistently anti-white or anti-Semitic.

One cannot help but ask whether this volume is a portrayal of the contemporary Negro mood or an historical account of the mood at the end of the peaceful, loving phase of the civil rights struggle. The attitudes so carefully measured by Marx certainly sustain the optimistic conclusions. Events of the past two years lead, however, to two questions: Has the mood changed, and how significant were the attitudes of the members of Marx's sample even at the time of the study?

The instrument used by Marx and NORC was a model of comprehensiveness. At times

it was admirably sensitive. A disturbing feature, however, is the study's concept of militancy. It encompasses conventional militancy of the style represented by non-violent, peaceful demonstrations, not militancy of the Black Power variety. Black nationalism was measured separately, but unfortunately it was identified with the philosophy of the Black Muslims. The secularization of black nationalism in the Black Power movement suggests that the index was too crude to measure the many nuances of nationalism, separatism, and pluralism which are now manifest.

Marx is commendably honest in pointing out the limitations of the study, although he has a tendency to discount their importance. But, giving him the benefit of the doubt and assuming that the survey was a reasonably accurate assessment of modal Negro attitudes in 1964, the reader is still haunted by the question, "Then how could the Negro revolution have since become so apparently violent and anti-white?" To the credit of the author's sociological acumen, he suggests two possible answers to this problem. First, he observes that while the collective mood of the Negro community was still fairly moderate in 1964, it is rare for a social movement to catch the interest of the entire mass and for more than a very small minority to be motivated to sustained action. Perhaps, then, the sample's minority who showed extreme nationalist and anti-white sentiments were more important for the future of the civil rights struggle than were the moderate majority. But secondly, both Marx and Bayard Rustin, in his preface, warn that continued frustration of Negro demands might lead to a sharp change in the Negro mood.

Ironically, these last observations which go beyond the author's data may have greater explanatory value than the conclusions based on his empirical findings. In any event, our inability to find in the data any basis for predicting what has actually happened since they were collected raises a serious question as to the value of this sort of attitude survey for a sociology which seeks to explain and predict social action.

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Tally's Corner: A Study of Negro Streetcorner Men. By ELLIOT LIEBOW. Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Co., 1967. xvii, 260 pp. \$2.25 (Paperback).

The lean, "dead-end" lives of many urban, lower-class, Negro American males are, like the weather, a subject of constant discussion but

hardly anyone does anything about them. Indeed, worse than the weather, social scientists speculate freely on the subject without conducting competent research to test their speculations. It is this sad context that makes anthropologist Elliot Liebow's *Tally's Corner* such a welcome contribution to the modern literature on urban life and deviance as well as race relations.

Liebow spent over a year during the early sixties conducting a thorough field study of two dozen men who "hang out" around a corner in the Washington, D.C. ghetto which featured a "carry out" restaurant. A far cry from the Indian village on Hudson Bay where he first did field work, Liebow rose to the challenge and provides a valuable appendix describing his field experience. Though his white skin posed problems, the author was not nearly as unprepared as most white social scientists: He had spent much of his childhood in the Washington Ghetto as the son of a Jewish immigrant family which operated neighborhood groceries.

The investigation constituted Liebow's doctoral research in anthropology at Catholic University, and it formed a part of the Child Rearing Study Project headed by Hylan Lewis (who provides a useful foreword). *Tally's Corner* is actually a successful blend of William Foote Whyte's *Streetcorner Society* and Kenneth Clark's *Dark Ghetto*. "Only in America" perhaps, but a Jewish anthropologist has produced a classic treatment of Negro Americans for a Roman Catholic University!

Liebow writes skillfully and sensitively. With a rare combination of concern and tough-mindedness, and with vivid and telling specificity, he provides insight into the relation of streetcorner men to their jobs, children, wives, lovers, and friends. The reader begins to glimpse the world through the eyes of Tally and his colleagues, although the writer never allows you to forget that these men are your fellow Americans, that their society is your society, that their lives and yours are profoundly intermeshed. Liebow concentrates on the streetcorner man's bravado and rationalizations ("theory of manly flaws," "exploiter of women," etc.) and his inconsistent behavior which belies these assertions.

The man of Tally's Corner is a loser and he knows it: "Armed with models who have failed, convinced of his own worthlessness, illiterate and unskilled, he enters marriage and the job market with the smell of failure all around him. . . . The streetcorner is, among other things, a sanctuary for those who can no longer endure the experience or prospect of failure." (pp. 211, 214) The corner is a haven because of its "shadow system of values" comprising