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The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare

Volume 23
Issue 4 *December*

Article 14

December 1996

Review of *Small Change: Domestic Policy under the Clinton Presidency*. David Stoesz. Reviewed by James Midgley, Louisiana State University.

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Recommended Citation

Midgley, James (1996) "Review of *Small Change: Domestic Policy under the Clinton Presidency*. David Stoesz. Reviewed by James Midgley, Louisiana State University," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 23: Iss. 4, Article 14.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15453/0191-5096.2386>

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol23/iss4/14>

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The authors insist that current social policies have serious implications for blacks in general and the black middle-class in particular. Policies based on income alone have failed to meet the needs of African-Americans because they underestimate the magnitude and scope of racial inequality that is based on wealth accumulation. Subsequently, the authors call for a massive refocusing of social policies that have prevented African-Americans, as a group, from accumulating wealth. These policies must provide asset formulation for people who William Julius Wilson calls the "truly disadvantaged". Then, the country can begin to provide real equality among the races.

This book challenges policy makers and social scientists to reevaluate their thinking about the root causes of inequality in the United States. It provides a much needed contribution to the public debate on social justice in America and offers tangible solutions to uniting the nation in its commitment to racial justice.

Lolita Perkins
Louisiana State University

David Stoesz, *Small Change: Domestic Policy under the Clinton Presidency*. New White Plains, NY: Longman, 1996. \$25.00 paper-cover.

Over the years, comparative social policy research has paid a good deal of attention to the differences between the welfare systems of the United States and the European countries. While many European welfare states are highly structured, centralized and coherent, the American system is often viewed as a patchwork quilt. Scholars have pointed out that American social policy has evolved in a haphazard fashion, that it is more subject to political interest group pressures than is social policy in Europe, and that it proceeds to deal with social problems incrementally.

In his analysis of the social policy agenda of the Clinton administration, David Stoesz not only confirms but emphasizes this view. Compared with the New Dealers, the Johnson War on Poverty and other periods of substantive social policy innovation, the Clinton years have involved little more than 'small changes' in social welfare thinking. There is, of course, no reason why any

president should make a commitment to revamping the American welfare system. But as Stoesz points out, Clinton not only declared his intention to find a 'new paradigm' for social policy, but the need for a new paradigm is today greater than ever before. As the New Deal crumbles and as the Radical Right continues to take the initiative and dominate social policy debates, progressives must abandon their defensive posture and go on the attack. But, as Stoesz shows, their intellectual weapons are obsolete and blunt.

The election of a Democrat president in 1992 seemed to offer the hope that new ideas would emerge, exciting policy initiatives would be formulated and that a new era in American social policy would dawn. However, while Clinton embarked on an ambitious legislative agenda, no new paradigm in social policy emerged. Several major initiatives in the field, such as health care and welfare reform, floundered. The Republican victory in 1994 exacerbated the problem and effectively blocked the introduction of new programs. Defensiveness increased and Clinton's posture, to parody Murray, became one of *shifting ground*. The prospect of major social policy changes, suited to the demands of a new era, dwindled.

At the time this review was being written, the presidential election was still months away. By the time it is read, the results of the election will be known. If Clinton is re-elected as many predicted in mid-1996, social policy renewal may still be possible. If not, further retrenchment of the New Deal welfare state is likely. Without change, American social policy will be unsuited to the demands of a new century in which the global economic system, increases in population mobility, enhanced decentralization and pluralism, and the need for investments in human capital become critical.

Small Change is an extremely interesting book. It transcends the dry historical style which characterizes many documentary accounts of presidential domestic policies and its racy approach is engaging. It is thoroughly researched, up to date and conceptually grounded. The author's ability to synthesize the major policy developments of the last four years is remarkable. It should not only serve as a reference work but be widely read by anyone interested in the issues facing American social policy today.

James Midgley
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