



March 1997

## *Turning Points in Social Security: From Cruel Hoax to Sacred Entitlement.* Sheryl R. Tynes.

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### Recommended Citation

(1997) "Turning Points in Social Security: From Cruel Hoax to Sacred Entitlement. Sheryl R. Tynes," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 24 : Iss. 1 , Article 19.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol24/iss1/19>

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poverty. However, these social problems are not new. They have existed since the emergence of the modern city. However, so have community-based organizations. Since the time that migrants first settled the city, local associations have formed to assist people deal with urban problems and enhance the quality of their lives.

This informative book examines the role of neighborhood organizations in the remediation of social problems. It pays particular attention to the economic level of the neighborhood as well as the wider urban context in which neighborhood organization takes place. This is done by examining neighborhood associations in two medium-sized cities, namely Albany and Schenectady in the state of New York. This comparison permits Rabrenovic to examine variations in community organizing in the context of both the local neighborhood and wider city. The distinction between the service-sector city (Albany) and the declining manufacturing city (Schenectady) provides an opportunity to compare gentrifying areas with low-income areas. The income level of each neighborhood, along with these broader structures, are shown to influence the resources available to local organizations, the goals of neighborhood groups and the participation of various social and religious organization.

This book offers a refreshing and innovative look at the often over-simplified topic of community revitalization. Rabrenovic does so by exploring factors relevant to the the emergence of effective neighborhood groups. She recognizes the essential link between the social and economic contexts as well as the need for national support for revitalization efforts. Her discussion of the necessity for these divergent element to cooperate makes a powerful argument which all those interested in community revitalization need to understand.

Sheryl R. Tynes, *Turning Points in Social Security: From Cruel Hoax to Sacred Entitlement*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996. \$39.50 hardcover.

At a time when social security is under increasingly scrutiny, there is a need to have accurate information about social security's contribution to American society over the years. Although critics claim that social security is expensive, bureaucratically rigid, demographically inappropriate and inequitable, many millions of

people have benefited from the social protection afforded by this important institution. When social security was introduced in the 1930s, its opponents claimed that it amounted a cruel hoax played on the American people by unscrupulous politicians. Later, social security was increasingly viewed as a sacred entitlement. Today, social security's position is tenuous. As the political right seeks to undermine the basis of the welfare state, the battle for social security will be a critical turning point for American social policy.

Sherry Tynes' informative and scholarly account of the historical evolution of social security will be an important resource for those who want to know the facts rather than the rhetoric about social security. Her richly documented study traces the development of social security since its early years right up to the present time. She highlights the turning points in the history of social security when major legislative and policy changes were introduced to reflect changing attitudes and social conditions. Her ability to transcend the limitations of a purely chronological narrative and to draw on wider social and cultural changes is remarkable. She shows how institutionalized beliefs about the virtues of community and shared responsibility have been increasingly replaced since the 1970s by a meaner individualism. To further strengthen her account, the author draws extensively on social theory, testing different conceptual explanations about the dynamics of social security. The book is an important contribution to the literature and deserves to be widely read.