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Review of *Low Income, Social Growth and Good Health: A History of Twelve Countries*. James C. Riley. Reviewed by Kristen Gustavson.

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analysis. Youth First is an outstanding example of the social change capabilities among urban youth in the Boston community. Unlike, for example, the artistic efforts of *Flix 4 Peace*—a group of youth learning a craft while developing consciousness-raising film festival features about urban issues such as youth violence—Youth First is, by and large, focused on community improvement and better service provision through social action and positive social change.

As noted in the book's epilogue, lack of resources and tensions with adult decision makers are examples of challenges associated with youth social activism. However, the idealism and optimism that youth bring to civic life far outweigh the challenges. Community engagement has taken a prominent role in contemporary macro practice, and youth-led community organizing is an outstanding exemplar. Delgado and Staples provide invaluable information which enriches our understanding of the world-wide youth development movement and its contemporary manifestation.

Wilma Peebles-Wilkins, Boston University

James C. Riley, *Low Income, Social Growth and Good Health: A History of Twelve Countries*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007. \$24.95 paperback.

Organized around both chronological and topical lines, the detailed case studies presented in this book examine the progress in life expectancy in twelve countries: Japan and Korea; Sri Lanka; Panama and Costa Rica; Cuba and Jamaica; the Soviet Union and China; Oman; and Venezuela and Mexico. Riley asserts that it was through the pursuit of social development rather than economic development that these low-income countries found ways to grow their own forms of social capital, even though their people had little capacity for spending on things other than the basic necessities of life and their governments lacked the revenues to fund costly social programs. Instead, these countries chose social growth in five particular areas: public health; education; basic health care; people's understanding of the health risks they faced; and people's participation in the effort to improve their own lives.

According to Riley, what is essential for longer lives is to build social capital.

Historically, it has been argued that economic modernization was the key in the transition toward health and longer life, and that societies need to develop their political, legal, and economic institutions in certain ways to promote change. Rather, Riley focuses on gains in social capital despite the lack of economic gains. He is not alone in this perspective: other studies such as those by the United Nations, the Rockefeller Foundation, and UNICEF have also examined successful country case studies to reveal conditions under which social progress can occur independently of economic advance. However, Riley suggests that previous studies have often focused on the period since 1960 and have failed to study their earlier history, specifically what Riley refers to as the period of achievement from 1890 to 1960.

Looking at the historical record in depth, Riley attempts to address these fundamental questions: How did these countries manage to match the rich lands in life expectancy? What can be learned from their historical experience? Does their experience expose policies that might be followed today and in the future by low-income lands that have not yet achieved high life expectancy? And does their experience shed light on options available to the rich lands that already have high life expectancy but also have health systems that are too costly?

Riley's conclusions are different from many other comparative studies, which attempt to find a dominant explanation that might serve as the marker for countries that lag. Instead, his idea is that countries can select among many options and opportunities, perhaps to find the programs and actions that are most easily adopted in the circumstances that prevail in their country. Riley offers the world a plan for development that will serve countries where incomes and life expectancy are both unacceptably low. He suggests three elements: first, the country that may benefit from social growth must already have attained a certain level of development. Secondly, the country needs to promote social development in some combination of education, public health, medicine, and popular participation that suits local preferences and serves local needs. Third, the people need to be engaged in controlling health risks. This is

Riley's essential point: people should become participants in social growth and improving health.

The book is an interesting, engaging and refreshing alternative to the traditional economic development model for poor countries. However, some weaknesses remain. For example, Riley asserts that factors such as paternalism and colonization are positive influences in a poor country's ability to make gains in life expectancy. In the light of this historical analysis, one might conclude that the poor countries of the world need another "manifest destiny." One also wonders if poor countries are merely figuring out how to keep their oppressed masses alive longer, not for the good of society, but for the benefit of corrupt governments and imperialistic rulers. In other words, longevity in the midst of oppressive regimes is possible. However, longevity in and of itself is not the marker of success or social capital that Riley suggests, nor is it necessarily indicative of community improvement.

Kristen Gustavson, University of California, Berkeley

Doris Marie Provine, *Unequal under Law: Race in the War on Drugs*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007. \$45.00 hardcover, \$18.50 papercover.

Nearly forty years since the official beginning of the War on Drugs, a broad consensus has grown that the drug war has not only been a failure, but one that is accompanied by intolerable social and economic costs. This author adds to the literature documenting these negative consequences and social injustices by offering a critical analysis about the ways in which race is inextricably tied to the drug war in the United States, both in the development of punitive drug policies and their disproportionately deleterious effect on minority communities.

At the heart of this analysis is the investigation into whether or not the United States is a "fully functioning democracy" committed to the tenets of equality espoused by the civil rights legislation of the 1960s. The author argues that, in fact and in impact, the policies of the drug war maintain the pre-Civil Rights racialized hierarchy that oppresses minorities, particularly African Americans. For the author, this is most