



December 1997

Still the Promised City?: African-Americans and New Immigrants in Postindustrial New York. Roger Waldinger. Reviewed by Charles Jaret, Georgia State University

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Recommended Citation

Jaret, Charles (1997) "*Still the Promised City?: African-Americans and New Immigrants in Postindustrial New York.* Roger Waldinger. Reviewed by Charles Jaret, Georgia State University," *The Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*: Vol. 24 : Iss. 4 , Article 12. Available at: <https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/jssw/vol24/iss4/12>

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long silence on violence in political theory and succeed in making us all ashamed of the long century of violence while working toward sensible ways to reduce it.

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Roger Waldinger, *Still the Promised City?: African-Americans and New Immigrants in Postindustrial New York*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996. \$35.00 hardcover.

Readers familiar with a similarly titled book by Moses Rischin (*The Promised City: New York's Jews 1870-1914*) might anticipate that this one offers a broad portrait of the cultures, social adaptations, political struggles, and economic experiences of New York's African-Americans and recent immigrants. If that's what you want, then this is not the book for you; instead it is devoted to one issue—the distribution of jobs among New York City's diverse workers. Waldinger carefully examines stability and change in the racial-ethnic division of labor, answering questions like “which racial-ethnic groups get the ‘good’ jobs and which get the ‘lousy’ jobs?”, “why does it work out that way despite official efforts to ‘open up’ the job market?”, and “why have immigrants entered certain industries in great numbers instead of (or as replacements for) African-American workers?”. Waldinger blitzes the reader with charts, graphs, and index numbers based on Census data from before WWII to 1990, showing the economic “ethnic niches” of New York City's native-born African-Americans, three large immigrant groups (the Chinese, Dominicans, and West Indians), and two older white ethnic groups (Jews and Italians). He also provides fascinating case studies, based on interviews with employers, union leaders, and labor department officials in industries that have served as economic niches for one or more NYC racial-ethnic groups: garment manufacturing, construction work, hotels and restaurants, working “for the City” (e.g., police, fire, welfare departments and other civil service jobs), and the world of small businesses run by ethnic entrepreneurs.

Waldinger finds that each racial-ethnic group's position in the job hierarchy is a complex function of demographics, political clout, industry structure, forms of racism, skill level (“what

you know"), and social capital ("who you know"). He shows that ethnic niches in New York's economy are not temporary phenomena—groups succeed each other in them, and upon moving out of one, group members usually concentrate in a few other niches instead of spreading out evenly among all industrial sectors. Waldinger's research testifies to the many ways and reasons employers and employees find it in their own interests to use friend/kin networks (predominantly of one racial-ethnic group) to recruit new workers in an industry, thereby privileging one group and excluding "ethnic outsiders." His most important conclusion, for readers interested in inter-group relations and racial stratification, is that new job opportunities and the prospect of upward socioeconomic mobility in the 1980s for New York's African-Americans and new immigrants, depended, more than anything else, on whites' selective abandonment of certain industries, which made room for new groups to enter and turn those jobs into their own ethnic niches.

Waldinger also deals with the question of job competition between African-Americans and new immigrants, and given the book's focus and data I expected a stronger treatment of this important issue. His discussion of it is too brief and scattered to drive home his conclusion—that immigrants are ensconced in some jobs that were once black economic niches, but the immigrants neither directly nor indirectly displaced them from those jobs.

Waldinger repeatedly tries to make the reader believe that his findings disconfirm the two most widely held explanations of present-day urban economic inequality—"jobs/skills mismatch" and post-industrial "polarization." He makes two arguments against the mismatch thesis (which claims high black unemployment and poverty are due to the loss of urban manufacturing jobs): (a) due to discrimination and declining interest in manufacturing jobs since the 1960s African-Americans had minimal presence in any NYC manufacturing activity, so a decline in manufacturing would not hurt them; and (b) although New York City lost many manufacturing jobs during the 1970s and 1980s, plenty of manufacturing jobs were still available due to the large number of vacancies created by retiring whites, but these were more attractive to immigrants than to New York's native-born blacks who at that time were making government jobs in

the public sector their first choice for employment. Waldinger's disagreement with the polarization thesis (that a post-industrial service and information based economy creates too many jobs at the high and low-paying extremes and not enough in the middle) is thinner—he simply asserts that contrary to the popular “hour-glass economy” metaphor, low-skill low-pay jobs really are not proliferating in New York City or in the country as a whole.

Social workers and applied sociologists may find this book interesting, but short on clinical or policy utility, especially since Waldinger emphasizes how social or governmental interventions intended to change patterns of racial-ethnic job recruitment have been negated by incumbent job-holders' informal connections in their ethnic niches. On the one hand, he shows how the construction industry minimized the entry of African-Americans despite social protest, political pressure, court-orders, and affirmative action plans; on the other hand, he explains how Mayor Koch's overturning of existing affirmative action plans from prior administrations did little to stem large-scale African-American entry into New York City's public sector workforce.

The author wrote this book with candor, objectivity, and a desire not to over-simplify complex and controversial issues. Perhaps for that reason evidence presented in some places seems to contradict arguments made elsewhere in the book. It is an important contribution to ongoing debates, but I think researchers on all sides of the issues addressed in this work will find much to argue with as well as much to praise and endorse.

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Mark Graber, *Rethinking Abortion: Equal Choice, the Constitution and Reproductive Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996. \$29.95 hardcover.

In *Rethinking Abortion: Equal Choice, the Constitution and Reproductive Politics*, Professor Mark Graber presents an interesting argument, one not immediately apparent from the title of this work, why abortion should remain legal. Promising to avoid a rehashing of the ongoing privacy debate, the author places the issue of equal access to abortion in the forefront and then frames