

book is at the forefront of those studies helping to analyze and explain the growing multiethnic and multiracial nature of U.S. cities.

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Double Trouble: Blacks Mayors, Black Communities, and the Call for a Deep Democracy, by J. Phillip Thompson. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005. 360 pp. \$29.95 (cloth).

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On the surface, *Double Trouble* might seem like another in a stream of scholarly works to attack Black mayors for not doing more to help the Black poor. What makes this book compelling is that Thompson seeks to understand, critique, and improve the coalition structure of Black urban politics, both internal and external, in an effort made all the more timely by the rise of Latino and other immigrant communities. Thompson provides a sophisticated, nuanced, critical, yet sympathetic analysis of why Black mayors tend to be unable, or unwilling, to mobilize the Black poor.

Unlike many other critics, he places this analysis in the context of the brittle, tough racial landscape Black mayors face. The fundamental obstacle is the resistance by the majority of Whites, and not just the rich Whites who provide a comfortable ideological target, to the evidence that racial inequality persists. The ability of conservative politicians to play on the gap between White and Black perceptions makes the Black political struggle an uphill one.

Thompson provides an illuminating exploration of the inner world of Black politics. Unlike Carmichael and Hamilton's (1967) *Black Power*, Thompson lifts the cover off the many differences among Black people in America. He is sharply critical of exclusionary tendencies *within* the African American political community while eloquently demonstrating the vast gap between how Blacks and Whites view life in America.

Whites who observe Black mayors from afar often see them as spokespeople for all Blacks, but actually they sit on top of a carefully constructed intra-Black coalition. He argues that Black communities "are more like a group thrown together in a condition of famine, with part of the group also without access to water, and some without medicine." This is the beginning of what Thompson calls "deep pluralism." He eloquently calls for a frank and open discussion of race both within the African American community and across racial lines.

Like Carmichael and Hamilton, Thompson argues that Black unity and mobilization are prerequisites of an outward-facing politics. The key to that unity and effectiveness, he finds, is the mass-based community organization (including Black-led unions) that can hold Black mayors accountable. He points to Harold Washington in Chicago and Kurt Schmoke in Baltimore as Black mayors whose narrow electoral (or re-electoral) success depended on mass mobilization of Blacks aided by Black grassroots organization and who then responded to the needs of the Black poor. The heart of Thompson's story is New York City. He provides a richly textured history of Black politics in the nation's largest city. In 1989, charter reform made the mayor the center of city government and weakened the leadership of the five boroughs. As a result, there was an opening to unify Black politics, previously splintered by borough.

Mass organizations, aided by new Black leadership of municipal unions, helped put David Dinkins into the mayor's office in 1989 by the narrowest of margins. But Dinkins at first disappointed his base by leaning toward his White financial backers and White middle-class voters. Then, Dinkins disappointed his White supporters during periods of racial polarization by not "standing up" to Black militancy. In the end, Dinkins was a nowhere man defeated by a race-baiting demagogue named Rudolph Giuliani, who egged on a rowdy crowd of New York policeman who themselves were making openly racist appeals against Dinkins.

Thompson's account of the Dinkins term is thorough and depressing, and no one knows the story better than Thompson, who closely worked with the mayor. One cannot help feeling, though, that even with Dinkins's limitations as a leader, his was almost a hopeless enterprise in the highly organized, pluralistic, contentious, racially tinged politics of New York City. Once White liberals became ambivalent to the Black struggle during the 1968 school strike, the road to Black leadership was extraordinarily difficult. Thompson seems very hopeful, though, about the Frederick Ferrer coalition that came next when the Latino candidate ran for mayor in 2001. Even in defeat, Ferrer followed Thompson's model of deep pluralism by reaching across racial lines to embrace the Black struggle and attracting some White liberal support in the bargain.

Thompson believes that Black politics for its own sake cannot work, an observation well supported by the rise of Latinos and Asian Americans in urban politics. His deep pluralism begins with a full relationship among and within Black networks of people and organizations. And then he envisions a multiracial, progressive politics including Latinos and Whites. I think this has a real chance of success, and the evidence from the Villaraigosa coalition in

Los Angeles is that younger African Americans are navigating this territory even more comfortably than the more established politicians.

But where are the White allies? Thompson argues that deep pluralism can get working-class Whites to see their own oppression and then make a common cause with Blacks. I think this is a chimera, and potentially a dangerous one. There is no evidence from his findings or from other research that any of the strategies of deep pluralism draw White working-class support.

In fact, White liberals are more likely to favor helping the Black poor than are any other White group, because in the American context racial, equality is essentially an ideological position, not one built on shared self-interest. At the end of the day, Blacks have a real chance to do productive coalition work with Latinos, as long as no one expects an automatic “coalition of color.” But when there is to be a “conversation” about race with Whites, sitting at the other end of the table are likely to be White liberals, the one group whose ideological affinity for equality has ever stood against the tide of White resistance to Black demands. Love ‘em or hate ‘em, they are still likely to be the White allies for an explicit agenda of racial equality.

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Reference

Carmichael, S. and C. Hamilton. 1967. *Black power: The politics of liberation in America*. New York: Vintage.

The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology, and Development in American Urbanism, by Jason Hackworth. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007. 225 pp. \$22.95 (paper).

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Neoliberalism is clearly an academic buzzword, used increasingly to describe the essential nature of the current political economy. Although there is a general consensus about what the term means—an erosion of the welfare state in favor of greater deference to market dynamics—the frequent use of neoliberalism threatens to erode its descriptive power. For that reason, it is extremely helpful when analysts work to take stock of a concept like this, to assess just what it is, or is not, helping us to understand.