BROWN IN BALTIMORE: SCHOOLS DESEGREGATION AND THE LIMITS OF LIBERALISM, by Howell S. Baum. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-8014-7652-5 (paperback), 274 pp.

Reviewed by

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It takes discipline to write an entire book about race and desegregation in Baltimore and not mention *Hairspray,* John Waters' campy movie in which feisty Tracy Turnblad leads local teens to break through the barriers that prevented blacks from taking part in the local rock and roll dance TV show. Howell Baum, a University of Maryland urban planner, has that discipline (I evidently do not). Like *Hairspray,* though, Baum's excellent book populates an account about broad social forces with portraits of very human individuals, most well intentioned, many heroic, all making concrete decisions based on partial information. Ironically, the usually sardonic Waters ends his story happily, with the city following Tracy on a journey toward racial enlightenment and narrow-minded bigots defeated and scorned, while Baum, the sincere scholar, tells the darker tale.

In many respects, Baltimore did "the right thing." Unlike many other Southern cities, its leaders did not dig trenches for resistance or even drag their feet. White civic leaders, for the most part, welcomed the chance to get on the right side of history. Black and white elites had a tradition of cordial relations, and previously had calmly negotiated some special exceptions to their dual school system. While some communities opted for massive resistance, the Baltimore school board voted to end formal segregation just weeks after the Supreme Court announced its verdict. At key points during the years that followed, when tensions threatened to boil over, black and white leaders found ways to lower the flames. In 1967, the city elected a liberal white mayor (Thomas D'Alesandro III) who deliberately had built a biracial coalition, winning 93 percent of the black vote, and promising in his inaugural address to "root out every cause or vestige of discrimination" (132). After a national search, the school board selected a new superintendent with a reputation for smoothly integrating the predominantly black system he had led, and the local NAACP applauded the appointment. Nine days later, Martin Luther King was assassinated.

King's assassination plays something of a turning point in the book. Baltimore had avoided riots when some other major cities had erupted, but this time it did not. Looting, fires, and violence lasted less than a week, but the psychological scars ran deep. Subsequently, white liberals were more cautious and could not count on broad support. Black leaders were warier too, with moderates to some extent elbowed aside by those with more aggressive timetables for social change. The national government became more aggressive in calling on Baltimore to affirmatively integrate its schools, but a decade and a half after positioning itself on the forefront of voluntary desegregation, Baltimore now was resistant to comply. School board meetings became more fractious. The new mayor (W. Donald Schaefer) feuded with the superintendent and seemed content to let interest

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groups squabble amongst themselves rather than invest his own political capital in building common ground.

Baum, though, portrays the real roots of Baltimore's failures as running deeper and developing earlier than the anger over the post-assassination riots. The city's decline into helplessness in coping with race was not a hairpin turn but a slow moving glacier, more or less predestined by political culture, ideology, and habits that Baum wraps up into the concept of liberalism. Liberalism, as he conceives it, buttressed the city's allegiance to individualism, freedom, and choice: all values that helped to support a readiness to toss aside formal segregation, but which created blind spots about more systemic forms of racial privilege, clashed with proposals to use government power to authoritatively intervene in pursuit of integration, and made it easy for the leaders to misgauge political reactions rooted in collective identities, hopes, and resentments tied to race. Above all else, Baltimore was unwilling—possibly unable—to talk about race, and as a direct result, missed chances to do something about it. Both black and white leaders felt more comfortable keeping race out of the public forum, in the mistaken view that what is not talked about will stay submerged. Instead, without public direction and absent a sense that someone was taking control, racial anxieties festered and churned, fueling white exit and cross-racial mistrust.

Baum tells the story of Baltimore so well that it is easy to lose track of the fact that—with variation in timing, style, and degree—the story of racial change unfolded so similarly in so many communities. Baum knows this and tries to put the city more clearly into a national context in the final chapter, and returns to the national scene at the end. But this is one of my few gripes with this excellent volume. If local culture, ideology, and personalities are so important that chronicling them warrants this attention, why is it that places with different values, ideas, and political elites did not diverge more in the roads they followed? But this is a small quibble, and the fact that the book prompts speculation like this is perhaps a mark of its success more than a blemish upon it.

SEARCHING FOR THE JUST CITY: DEBATES IN URBAN THEORY AND PRACTICE, edited by Peter Marcuse, James Connolly, Johannes Novy, Ingrid Olivo, Cuz Poter and Justic Steil. New York: Routledge, 2009. ISBN: 10: 0415776139 (cloth); 264 pp., 10: 0203878833 (ebk).

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Searching for the Just City is an engaging collection of essays that was initially solicited for a 2006 conference organized by graduate students at Columbia University focused on Susan Fainstein's concept of a "Just City." Written by both established and emerging scholars in the field of urban planning, the book takes on a solutions-oriented approach to urban problems that goes beyond merely coming up with new ways of structuring the current

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