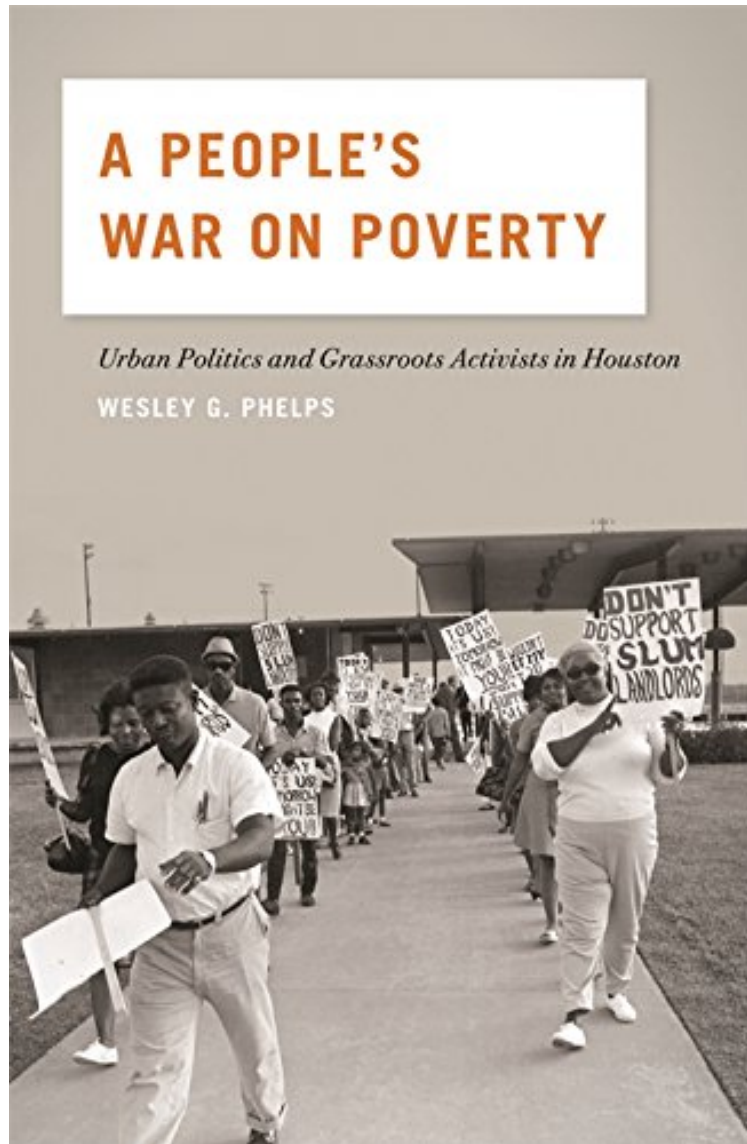


A People's War on Poverty: Urban Politics and Grassroots Activists in Houston

Wesley Phelps

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#2232964 in Books Phelps Wesley 2014-04-15 2014-04-15 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.90 x .70 x 5.90l, .0 #File Name: 0820346713264 pages A People's War on Poverty Urban Politics and Grassroots Activists in Houston | File size: 74.Mb

Wesley Phelps : A People's War on Poverty: Urban Politics and Grassroots Activists in Houston before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A People's War on Poverty: Urban Politics and Grassroots Activists in Houston:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. This book is an excellent framing of the civil rights and poor people's movement ...By L. Taylor GroverThis book is an excellent framing of the civil rights and poor people's movement in Houston, TX. Against the backdrop of Johnson's war on poverty and all its implications for racial, inequality and economic well-being, Phelps examines the grassroots movement from the perspective of local officials, clergy, activists and minority groups whose voices oftentimes go unheard in terms of local struggles. What I like most about this book, however, is that it highlights the diversity of race, life walk and socioeconomic statuses of those involved in changing the world. The book is a bit academic, but even the non-academic reader can follow and appreciate the policy and historical context of this book.

In *A Peoples War on Poverty*, Wesley G. Phelps investigates the on-the-ground implementation of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty during the 1960s and 1970s. He argues that the fluid interaction between federal policies, urban politics, and grassroots activists created a significant site of conflict over the meaning of American democracy and the rights of citizenship that historians have largely overlooked. In Houston in particular, the War on Poverty spawned fierce political battles that revealed fundamental disagreements over what democracy meant, how far it should extend, and who should benefit from it. Many of the programs implementers took seriously the federal mandate to empower the poor as they pushed for a more participatory form of democracy that would include more citizens in the political, cultural, and economic life of the city. At the center of this book are the vitally important but virtually forgotten grassroots activists who administered federal War on Poverty programs, including church ministers, federal program volunteers, students, local administrators, civil rights activists, and the poor themselves. The moderate Great Society liberalism that motivated the architects of the federal programs certainly galvanized local antipoverty activists in Houston. However, their antipoverty philosophy was driven further by prophetic religious traditions and visions of participatory democracy and community organizing championed by the New Left and iconoclastic figures like Saul Alinsky. By focusing on these local actors, Phelps shows that grassroots activists in Houston were influenced by a much more diverse set of intellectual and political traditions, fueling their efforts to expand the meaning of democracy. Ultimately, this episode in Houston's history reveals both the possibilities and the limits of urban democracy in the twentieth century.

Wesley Phelps reveals a largely unacknowledged Houston. He tells a story of poverty and power through a series of moments when a diverse group of local people told a generation how things had to be different. Battling over ideas from prophetic Christianity, the radical New Left, the emerging Sunbelt, the Old South, and the controversial War on Poverty, they launched a fierce argument about the kind of power that working Americans should have and the kind of Houston that would emerge from the end of Jim Crow. (Kent B. Germany author of *New Orleans after the Promises: Poverty, Citizenship, and the Search for the Great Society*) Wesley G. Phelps has written an engaging and informative case study . . . [I] recommend this work to both academic and general readers interested in American civil rights history. . . . Phelps has provided a valuable and significant contribution to the scholarship on America's War on Poverty. (M. Courtney Welch *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*) Wesley G. Phelps's *A Peoples War on Poverty* is an important contribution to the growing historical literature about the antipoverty crusade at the local level. The focus is on Houston, one of the most understudied cities in the South, and on the grassroots activists who fought there. . . . In addition to being an important piece of historical scholarship, this well-written book will easily find its way into college classes on the War on Poverty, the long civil rights movement, and the rise of late twentieth-century conservatism. It also takes its place in the growing and stimulating literature on post World War II Texas. (Robert Korstad *Journal of American History*) About the Author WESLEY G. PHELPS is assistant professor of history at Sam Houston State University.