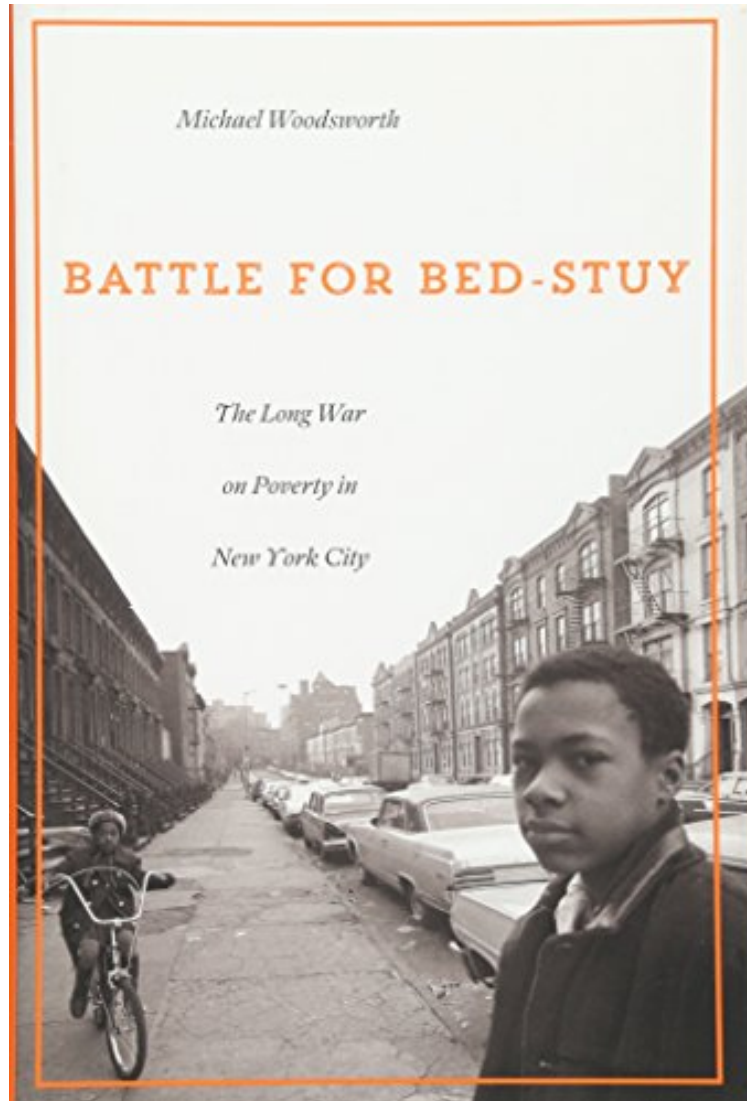


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Battle for Bed-Stuy: The Long War on Poverty in New York City

Michael Woodsworth

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Michael Woodsworth : Battle for Bed-Stuy: The Long War on Poverty in New York City before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Battle for Bed-Stuy: The Long War on Poverty in New York City:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Solid research; but hindered by poor organization by the author By Ryan Flynn The author attempts to tackle that multi-front issue of poverty that was a defining issue of the 1960s and places it in the more digestible context of one region of the greater New York metropolitan area known as Bedford-Stuyvesant. At the same time, he also undercuts his research by having no real order for how he presents this research,

with the narrative jumping around between the 1930s and 1970s, bringing in multiple organizations and actors many times over without properly introducing them to the audience. I wanted to like this book. Again, there is a lot of research that was done, and it had all the potential to be a transformative historical account for how the War on Poverty impacted a community, but due to the author's writing approach a lot of this potential falls away quickly. To a historian or policymaker, this is a good book to provide some additional context for your work. To the everyday person who wants to learn more, this is completely inaccessible. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Three Stars By robert vitaglione Could have used better research. No mention of John Powis part in this battle 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Well meaning. Dreary. Filled with words of today ... By preppy Well meaning. Dreary. Filled with words of today such as "urgent." The author tries to strike a balance between sympathy for activists and a more academic analysis but ultimately he loses it, and accomplishes neither objective. The definitive word for this book is not "urgent" but rather "compromised."

Half a century after the launch of the War on Poverty, its complex origins remain obscure. *Battle for Bed-Stuy* reinterprets President Lyndon Johnson's much-debated crusade from the perspective of its foot soldiers in New York City, showing how 1960s antipoverty programs were rooted in a rich local tradition of grassroots activism and policy experiments. Bedford-Stuyvesant, a Brooklyn neighborhood housing 400,000 mostly black, mostly poor residents, was often labeled America's largest ghetto. But in its elegant brownstones lived a coterie of home-owning professionals who campaigned to stem disorder and unify the community. Acting as brokers between politicians and the street, Bed-Stuy's black middle class worked with city officials in the 1950s and 1960s to craft innovative responses to youth crime, physical decay, and capital flight. These partnerships laid the groundwork for the federal Community Action Program, the controversial centerpiece of the War on Poverty. Later, Bed-Stuy activists teamed with Senator Robert Kennedy to create America's first Community Development Corporation, which pursued housing renewal and business investment. Bed-Stuy's antipoverty initiatives brought hope amid dark days, reinforced the social safety net, and democratized urban politics by fostering citizen participation in government. They also empowered women like Elsie Richardson and Shirley Chisholm, who translated their experience as community organizers into leadership positions. Yet, as Michael Woodsworth reveals, these new forms of black political power, though exercised in the name of poor people, often did more to benefit middle-class homeowners. Bed-Stuy today, shaped by gentrification and displacement, reflects the paradoxical legacies of midcentury reform.

In this engaging and powerful book, Michael Woodsworth recasts the War on Poverty as the fruit of a long community-based struggle against urban disinvestment and racism. By showing just how much of 1960s urban reform percolated up from the grassroots, *Battle for Bed-Stuy* offers fresh insight into the relationship between activism and policy and the promises and perils of place-based politics. (Mason B. Williams, author of *City of Ambition: FDR, LaGuardia, and the Making of Modern New York*) This original and well-written account of postwar community activism makes an excellent and provocative case that Bed-Stuy, long overshadowed by Harlem, is a key site for understanding postwar African American history. (Karen Ferguson, author of *Top Down: The Ford Foundation, Black Power, and the Reinvention of Racial Liberalism*) An impressive work that shows how local bureaucracies and energized political activists in this case innovative African American residents and property owners made the War on Poverty do what it was intended to do: reflect the interests of local people who knew Bed-Stuy was a community, not a so-called slum. (Kent B. Germany, University of South Carolina) [This book] will especially interest readers who want to understand the political economy of the war on poverty. Moreover, though Woodsworth's book focuses on a single American neighborhood, it gives readers a look at the forces that led to failures, and successes, in combating poverty in many American cities during the post-war period. The book is very well written. *Battle for Bed-Stuy* is an excellent introduction to how the war on poverty played out in the largest ghetto in America's largest city. (F. H. Smith Choice 2016-11-01) About the Author Michael Woodsworth teaches history at Bard High School Early College, Queens.