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Lee Rainwater

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Lee Rainwater : Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Families in a Federal Slum before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Behind Ghetto Walls: Black Families in a Federal Slum:

This book is about the family lives of some 10,000 children and adults who live in an all-Negro public housing project in St Louis. The Pruitt-Igoe project is only one of the many environments in which urban Negro Americans lived in

the 1960s, but the character of the family life there shares much with the family life of lower-class Negroes as it has been described by other investigators in other cities and at other times, in Harlem, Chicago, New Orleans, or Washington D.C. This book is primarily concerned with private life as it is lived from day to day in a federally built and supported slum. The questions, which are treated here, have to do with the kinds of interpersonal relationships that develop in nuclear families, the socialization processes that operate in families as children grow up in a slum environment, the informal relationships of children and adolescents and adults with each other, and, finally, the world views (the existential framework) arising from the life experiences of the Pruitt-Igoeans and the ways they make use of this framework to order their experiences and make sense out of them. The lives of these persons are examined in terms of life cycles. Each child there is born into a constricted world, the world of lower class, Negro existence, and as he grows he is shaped and directed by that existence through the day-to-day experiences and relationships available to him. The crucial transition from child of a family; to progenitor of a new family begins in adolescence, and for this reason the book pays particular attention to how each new generation of parents expresses the cultural and social structural forces that formed it and continue to constrain its behavior. This book, in short, is about intimate personal life in a particular ghetto setting. It does not analyze the larger institutional, social structural, and ideological forces that provide the social, economic, and political context in which lower-class Negro life is lived. These larger macro sociological forces are treated in another volume based on research in the Pruitt-Igoe community. However, this book does draw on the large body of literature on the structural position of Negroes in American society as background for its analysis of Pruitt-Igoe private life.

This book represents one analytical aspect of data obtained in a six-year study of a Federal housing project in St. Louis. There was a brief period of racial integration following a court ruling on the original separate-but-equal housing plan, but within a short time the thirty-three eleven-story buildings housed a totally Black community. In 1959, five years after it was opened for occupancy, the Pruitt-Igoe Development had become a community scandal and even the 10,000 residents in the the complex still left it with the highest vacancy rate of any public housing complex in the country. M. Estellie Smith, *American Anthropologist* Rainwaters book represents the results of much that has been happening to social scientists in the field of race relations since the mid-1960s This book is mandatory reading for students of race relations, has much to say to students of social policy, and is deserving of a place on reading lists for methodology courses. Robert S. Moore, *The British Journal of Sociology* The research on which this book was based focuses upon the family lives of some 10,000 black children and adults living in the Pruitt-Igoe public housing project in St. Louis. The project has periodically received coverage from the national news media by virtue of its high incidence of crime, delinquency, tenant fear, illegitimacy, matrifocal families, welfare dependency, unemployment, poor school performance, racial problems, and widespread physical deterioration The data, gained through participant observation and unstructured interviews, reveal ghetto life as entailing considerable deprivation and frustration as well as a community of people who think poorly of each other, who attack, exploit, and manipulate each other, and who give each other small comfort in a desperate world. James W. Vander Zanden, *Contemporary Sociology* Although it is hardly unexpected, it is worth noting that the qualities which established *Trans-action* as an important policy-oriented magazine in the latter half of the 1960s are particularly evident in the latest writing of its senior editor, Lee Rainwater. The freshness and honesty of his approach would have been surprising in *Behind Ghetto Walls* a long summary of eight years of field work had it not been for the success of the magazine [A] most impressive achievement. Hannan Rose, *Sociology* About the Author Lee Rainwater is professor emeritus of sociology at Harvard University and research director emeritus of the Luxembourg Income Study. He was an editor at *Transaction*, the associate editor of the *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, and a member of the review board of *Sociological Quarterly*. He has written various books and many professional journal articles, including *Poor Kids in a Rich Country: Americas Children In Comparative Perspective*; *Income Packaging in the Welfare State: A Comparative Study of Family Income*; and *Social Policy and Public Policy: Inequality and Justice*.