

continues to falter. Suddenly the three billion a year that has been Israel's on demand becomes very questionable indeed. A president appeals to the American people for support in breaking the nefarious grip of the Jewish lobby, as Bush did last Yom Kippur, but this time he asks not just once, but often. In addition, the American political system continues to deteriorate; lacking the fine motor coordination to deal with reality, it resorts more and more to the broad strokes of media manipulation, mythology, and the use of scapegoats. The Japanese serve as scapegoats for a while, but there is one incomparably powerful political mythology, custom-made for Western needs, bred as it was within the very bones of Western history, and that, of course, is anti-Semitism.

The immigrants brought it with them. It has caught fire from time to time within a black community whose grievances and pain remain untouched by conventional political processes. And it germinates, as always, in elite Republican venues and hideaways.

I do not believe the United States can turn on Israel without activating reserves of anti-Semitism. And then, if the economy is as bad as I've posited, and the politics as deranged, the Patrick Buchanans, the David Dukes, and the Louis Farrakhans pour out of the sidelines into the mainstream. Strange couplings, awful unions, unimaginable alliances occur. Anti-Semitism unites those it would seem

that racism would permanently divide. America ceases to be the safe place for Jews, the one great exception.

And Israel is alone and under attack in an environment in which it has earned no useful allies.

Does *Chutzpah*, with its wide readership, its persuasiveness, and its sweep, help prevent this nightmare or one similar to it? In some ways it helps bring the nightmare on. Proud Zionist that Dershowitz is, he nevertheless manages to convert Israel into something strangely passive. Given that anti-Semitism (now anti-Zionism) will propagate no matter what, nothing Israel does can alter its fate. So don't bother to change Israel—the outcome will be the same in any case. Put the emphasis elsewhere. Go after the media, monitor the news reports, kill the messenger.

This view is thoroughly incapacitating. Perhaps it testifies to the damage done to political imagination by a decade and a half of Likud. (Twelve years of Reaganism have wrought similar consequences here.) Dershowitz is correct in asserting that Israel is at the vanguard of Jewish existence; wrong in overlooking how deeply its actions determine its own fate and the fate of Jews everywhere.

*Chutzpah* has no lack of fighting spirit and forthrightness, no fear of engaging with the crucial issues of being Jewish today, and no reluctance to take on anti-Semitism everywhere it exists

(and, perhaps, for good measure, one or two places it doesn't—it is difficult, for example, to tell from the text whether the author was justified in opposing the appearance of Richard von Weizsäcker at Harvard). Compared to more richly nuanced books that shy away from key questions, *Chutzpah* is refreshing. On the other hand, Dershowitz's model of American Jewry's relation to Israel is, in the end, not very different from that prescribed by Yitzhak Shamir. On that fundamental question Dershowitz is Shamir cleaned up—laundered—for American tastes.

*Chutzpah* foments public discussion. Its call for collective, late twentieth-century Jewish reorientation is to be welcomed. I would be glad for the book if for no other reason than its having guided me to evidence of a Jewish revenge movement after World War II—not Jews who refused the machine guns offered to them by camp liberators, but Jews who organized to seek their tormentors out; not Nazi hunters but Nazi killers (see Michael Elkins's *Forged in Fury*). The only question is why so little has been said or written about this organization of survivors, and why it plays no part in Jewish memory, where it deserves an honored place.

But the map for Jewish survival *Chutzpah* defends is an old map. And in certain sections the author gets edgy. He thinks he has the only legitimate view and turns the verbal Uzi on those who see a different way. □

"quiet riots" of our time—are simply symptoms of economic decline and social alienation, which affect cities and suburbs alike.

Cities are the engines of our nation's economy. Revitalizing the cities means more than putting a lid on potential social upheaval. It is a precondition for restoring the nation's economic health and competitiveness in the global marketplace. It is a matter of economic recovery as well as social justice. No other major industrial nation—neither Canada, the European countries, nor Australia—has allowed its cities to fall into such chaos and neglect. How did we get into this mess?

For three decades after World War II, the United States witnessed one of the most dramatic population shifts in its history as millions of Americans migrated from cities to suburbs. Many observers have concluded that America's postwar suburban migration was a "natural" process of evolution, the result of millions of separate decisions by individual consumers seeking single-family homes, improved public schools, and better lives for their families. But that is only part of the story. In fact, the power brokers in America's corporate boardrooms and developers' suites—and their allies in the White House and Congress—played a critical role in the migration. As historian Kenneth Jackson describes in *Crabgrass Frontier*, these consumer choices were not only shaped but subsidized by federal government policies that pushed people out of cities and pulled them into suburbs. New highways (such as Route 128 outside Boston) opened up the hinterlands to speculation and development. Housing policies offered government-insured mortgages to whites in suburbia but passed over the inner cities. Postwar boom industries (subsidized by the Pentagon) concentrated production and research facilities in outlying areas. Tax policies coaxed businesses into the cities, and bulldozer urban renewal policies destroyed working-class neighborhoods (such as Boston's West End, described in Herbert Gans's classic *Urban Villagers*) to make way for businesses downtown, scattering their residents to blue-collar suburbs.

As a result of these policies, America's cities have faced a shrinking tax base and recurrent fiscal traumas. In 1960, the per capita income of cities was 5 percent greater than in surrounding

suburbs; by 1987, per capita income in cities had fallen to 59 percent of suburban income. A recent book by two MIT economists, Bernard Frieden and Lynn Sagalyn, *Downtown, Inc.*, demonstrates that even cities that have worked successfully to revitalize their downtown commercial business districts—to expand the tax base and jobs—still lack the revenue to meet the needs of their residents. Cities are trapped by rising costs, shrinking resources, and borders they cannot expand. To avert fiscal collapse, many cities have been closing schools, hospitals, police and fire stations, laying off essential employees, reducing basic services such as maintenance of parks and streets, and postponing or canceling capital improvements.

As local governments downsize their operations, the poor and working-class residents of America's cities are pitted against each other for these shrinking resources, turf, and symbols. The conflicts between Jews and blacks in New York City, between Hispanics and blacks in Washington and Miami, and between the Irish and blacks during Boston's busing crisis are all symptoms of the shifting urban landscape.

Fights over municipal services, public sector jobs, housing subsidies, hospitals and health clinics, and school funding often take the form of ethnic and racial conflicts. But they are also rooted in America's widening class inequalities. A recent Congressional Budget Office report reveals that the richest 1 percent of the American population gobbled up two-thirds of the economic growth during the 1980s. Their after-tax incomes more than doubled, while the bottom 60 percent of the population experienced a decline in income. This concentration of wealth—the widest disparity of all the major industrial nations—reflects a decade of misguided national policies. The White House and Congress looked the other way while junk-bond junkies, merger maniacs, and Savings and Loans speculators rode roughshod over the American economy. Greedy corporate CEOs paid themselves giant-sized salaries and bonuses while laying off workers and busting unions. At the same time, real wages for most Americans declined, forcing families to work harder just to stay afloat. Even so, a growing number of Americans—the working poor—earn their poverty on the job. The struggles between wealthy suburbs and fiscally

## BOOK REVIEW

# Cities Under Siege

Peter Dreier

*The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions* by Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon. The Free Press, 1992, 370 pp.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the "long hot summer," when Detroit, Newark, and other cities erupted in riots. Today,

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America's cities are once again ticking time bombs waiting to explode. Economically, socially, and politically, our country cannot afford more civil disorder. But it is unclear whether America can summon the political will to address the root causes of social unrest. In this year's presidential elections, for the first time ever the majority of voters will be suburbanites. Some pundits claim that, as a result, the nation's political leaders have little incentive to address the level of sheer

destitution and decay—poverty, homelessness, hunger, slums, and crumbling infrastructure—overtaking the cities. But suburbanites, too, have a stake in repairing our cities. Many inner-ring suburbs share the same social, fiscal, and economic troubles that plague the inner cities. Even bedroom suburbs cannot quarantine themselves from the effects of a troubled economy, widening income disparities, and rising poverty. Drugs, crime, gangs, and violence—what some have called the

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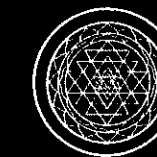
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strapped cities are merely symptoms of these widening inequities.

More than any other white ethnic group, America's Jews participated in the exodus to the suburbs. Not only the Jewish population, but also their institutions—synagogues, community centers, delis, social clubs—left for greener pastures. Although the headquarters of most national and regional Jewish groups are still located in big cities, American Jewry's social and cultural center of gravity is now firmly in suburbia. Of course, many Jews still live in major cities—particularly the elderly, young singles, baby boomers without kids, and college students. But most of them are not part of formal Jewish institutions or informal community networks. With only a few exceptions (such as some Chasidic areas), there are few Jewish neighborhoods in big cities where Jewish residents and institutions dominate the physical and cultural environment.

Tension between Jews and blacks has been a common feature of American urban life for decades. It provokes special angst and appears particularly tragic because these two groups were once allies in the struggle against discrimination and injustice. Until the late 1960s, the two groups lived in close physical proximity in urban neighborhoods. Regular contact created opportunities for both conflict and cooperation. Today, however, American cities are more racially separated than ever. The recent violent conflicts between blacks and Chasidic Jews in New York reflect the hard edge of ethnic competition, but it takes more subtle forms, too. Over the years, several themes have persisted in Jewish-black relations. Blacks have resented both the Jews who left (joining the allegedly racist "white flight" to the suburbs) and the Jews who stayed (as neighbors, shopkeepers, landlords, teachers, and social workers). Jews have resented the blacks who moved in, changing the fragile social and cultural scaffolding of their neighborhoods.

Jews and blacks alike wanted it both ways: peaceful integration and community control of their institutions. This conflict between integration and separation is an ongoing paradox in American life. In the case of blacks and Jews, it has torn apart the political and social alliance that helped remove many long-standing barriers to equality and opportunity in American life.

A new book about black-Jewish relations in Boston offers a fresh perspective on this historic tension. In *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*, Hillel Levine (a Boston University sociologist and an ordained rabbi) and Lawrence Harmon (a Dorchester native who edited the *Jewish Advocate* before moving to the *Brookline Citizen*) describe how, from the 1950s to the 1970s, Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan changed from stable Jewish neighborhoods to troubled black ghettos.

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*One real-estate broker later recounted his experience in an article called "Confessions of a Blockbuster." He was told: "Just scare the hell out of them."*

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Most newcomers to Boston do not realize that only a few decades ago, a vibrant Jewish community existed in these neighborhoods. Once home to about ninety thousand Jews, by the late 1960s about forty thousand Jews still lived in this compact area, served by many synagogues, settlement houses, social clubs, shops, credit unions, and Jewish elected officials. Blue Hill Avenue (often called "Jew Hill Avenue" by anti-Semites) was a thriving commercial center catering to Jewish customers. Today, a former Kosher meat market is a Caribbean restaurant (the "American Kosher Products" sign is still there). Former synagogue buildings now serve the African-American community. The former Hebrew College (relocated to suburban Brookline) now houses Freedom House, a black community center, while the former Hecht House (a Jewish settlement house) now houses the black-run Lena Park Community Development Corporation.

Levine and Harmon focus on a program called the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (BBURG), through which bankers, brokers, and appraisers used unscrupulous and racist blockbusting tactics to push working-class and elderly whites—mostly Jews—out of these neighborhoods during the

late 1960s and early 1970s. In doing so, BBURG exacerbated the city's racial segregation and compounded its racial fears, which exploded a few years later during the busing controversy.

BBURG was a consortium of twenty-two lending institutions (run primarily by WASPs) that in 1968, in response to Mayor Kevin White's request to help relieve the city's growing racial unrest, agreed to target \$29 million in low-cost, low-down-payment mortgages to black home buyers. The White administration (but not the general public) knew that the bankers would allow the black home buyers to purchase homes only in a restricted area—the predominantly Jewish sections of Dorchester and Mattapan—thus extending the Roxbury black ghetto. With the consent of city officials, the BBURG area specifically excluded Boston's other white neighborhoods and its suburbs.

Why target the Jewish areas? According to Levine and Harmon, the bankers and city officials figured that the Jews—because they were more liberal, or because they were less rooted—would be less resistant to incoming black neighbors and an integrated neighborhood than other white groups. The Italian and Irish neighborhoods, they predicted, would use their political muscle to resist. But because many long-term Jewish residents had paid off their low-interest mortgages, there wasn't much turnover, and thus little profit to be made. By encouraging blacks to purchase homes in this heavily Jewish area, the banks could replace the outstanding 3 percent and 5 percent loans with more profitable 8.5 percent loans, risk-free because of insurance provided by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

The BBURG program unleashed a frenzy of racist blockbusting. Soon after BBURG was announced, new real estate offices suddenly opened up on Blue Hill Avenue and nearby streets to market the federal government-backed loans. Unscrupulous agents (who in BBURG got double the typical 6 percent commission) and appraisers colluded to create panic among working-class and elderly residents. They knocked on doors, made phone calls, distributed flyers, hired thugs to intimidate residents, and spread vicious rumors to frighten residents about violent crime, declining property values, and vandalism to

synagogues and other Jewish institutions. The message was the same: "Cash for homes. Sell now before it's too late."

BBURG real-estate agents pressured white home owners to sell their one-, two-, and three-family houses at panic-driven low prices, and then resold them to eager black families at much higher prices. This played on the desperation many black homeowners felt when urban renewal projects displaced them from Roxbury and left them with limited opportunities to buy homes in other white neighborhoods. The BBURG bankers and brokers made out like bandits.

Because HUD appraisers, in cahoots with the banks, overvalued the BBURG properties (or, in many cases, didn't do an inspection at all), many unsuspecting new owners faced major repairs they could not afford. This led to a massive wave of foreclosures on BBURG-linked houses—70 percent of BBURG home owners eventually lost their homes. But because the loans were HUD-insured, the banks were not at risk, so they had an incentive to foreclose quickly; in fact, they made a tidy profit on both the original mortgages and the foreclosures.

The impact was dramatic. From 1950 to 1960, before BBURG's blockbusting campaign, Mattapan's black population had increased only slightly, from .3 percent of neighborhood residents (129 of 44,520) to only 1 percent (406 of 44,290). By 1970, after the blockbusting began, the figure jumped to 41 percent (18,616 of 45,449); by 1980, it was over 80 percent (28,940 of 35,827). The sharpest turnover occurred from 1968 to 1972—the BBURG years.

Many residents believe, in retrospect, that much of the violent crime that hit Mattapan and Dorchester at the time—including an incident in which thugs knocked on the door of a young rabbi and threw acid in his face—was paid for by speculators, eager to push whites out. These suspicions are consonant with the instructions received by one broker, hired during the early BBURG days, who later recounted his experience in an article called "Confessions of a Blockbuster." He was told: "Just scare the hell out of them."

BBURG left a legacy of broken dreams among both black and white residents. The subsequent decline of many sections of Roxbury, Dorchester,

and Mattapan—the widening swath of boarded-up buildings and vacant lots, the epidemic of arson during the late 1970s, and the increase in crime—lent credence to the myth that a neighborhood goes downhill when blacks move in. As a result, residents of other white neighborhoods were often wary of even modest integration. Others put the blame on the white residents and shopkeepers who moved out, accusing them of racism.

But Levine and Harmon show that both blacks and whites were unwitting victims of the BBURG bankers and blockbusters, who laid the groundwork for segregation and disinvestment. The authors turn most of their moral outrage on the bankers, brokers, HUD bureaucrats, and city officials who either engineered the BBURG program or did nothing to stop it. But they also point their fingers at the affluent leaders of Boston's Jewish organizations who, they claim, virtually abandoned the working-class and elderly Jews struggling to survive in the inner city. They describe this as the Jewish community's "dirty little secret": class conflict.

According to Levine and Harmon, most mainstream Jewish organizations turned a deaf ear when Dorchester and Mattapan Jews sought help in stabilizing their communities and promoting peaceful integration. Boston's Jewish weekly paper failed to cover the blockbusting campaign or the class conflict; only when these problems turned up in the big daily papers—and by then, most of the damage had been done—did the Jewish establishment offer help in the form of social services and housing relocation. The failure of the mainstream Jewish groups left a vacuum filled by the Jewish Defense League, a small group of angry street toughs who focused solely on the symptoms of the problem—rising levels of crime—and exacerbated the racial conflict by ignoring underlying causes.

Why was the Jewish establishment so passive? Levine and Harmon suggest that Jewish leaders, themselves having moved to the suburbs, envisioned the Jewish future there, too. Beginning in the 1950s, and accelerating through the early 1970s, the wealthy board members of the synagogues and social agencies had pulled up their stakes, leaving their poorer fellow Jews behind. In addition, a

number of prominent Jews—real estate lawyers, developers, businessmen—were key players in the city's corporate power structure. They had helped shape the urban renewal programs that changed Boston's downtown skyline and its residential neighborhoods: For example, attorney Lewis Weinstein, a major leader in the Jewish establishment during the 1950s and 1960s and a key architect of the city's urban renewal program, viewed the predominantly black composition of Boston's inner-city neighborhoods as a fait accompli and encouraged Jewish institutions to abandon these areas.

Many Boston Jews were in the forefront of the civil-rights movement, but most Jewish and black community leaders were too fatalistic or indifferent to pursue a black-white alliance to promote strong integrated neighborhoods. The book describes the frustrated efforts of the Mattapan Organization, an interracial group that tried to work within conventional channels on housing, schools, and other issues—but received little encouragement from Jewish organizations, black community leaders, or the Catholic parishes. At the time, there were no biracial grass-roots protest groups, such as the Alinskyite Massachusetts Fair Share, which didn't appear until the mid-1970s, to mobilize residents against the banks, brokers, and City Hall.

Levine and Harmon have not written a dry academic monograph. They interviewed dozens of white and black participants and provide colorful vignettes documenting the efforts of political figures, community activists, and local institutions. While focusing on BBURG, they tell the story of postwar Boston, the evolution of the city's civil-rights movement and black-Jewish relations, the struggles over urban renewal, and the shifting sands of neighborhood politics.

The authors recognize that, even before the racial rebellions of the 1960s, life wasn't easy for the Jewish and black working class and poor. But when they describe how BBURG turned these potential allies into rivals, their sympathies are clearly with those people—black and white—who tried, however futilely, to resist becoming victims.

At times, the authors fall into the trap of nostalgia for the "good old days" on Blue Hill Avenue. They appear to

believe that if the Jewish establishment's leaders had only supported the working-class Jews and helped fight the blockbusting rather than ignoring it, the Jewish community would have continued to have a strong presence in Boston's inner-city neighborhoods. That bit of conjecture is unwarranted. More likely, even without BBURG, the social, economic, and political forces that pushed whites out of cities and pulled them into suburbia were too strong to resist. As they did in other cities, most Jews would have moved out eventually, as the next generation pursued the American Dream of upward mobility and suburbia. But BBURG compressed this transformation, so that instead of taking decades it occurred within a few years. This made the transformation more volatile and explosive than it would have been, creating a great deal of finger-pointing and bitterness among blacks and Jews.

In making their case, Levine and Harmon downplay the efforts of some Jewish groups that worked to stabilize neighborhoods and promote peaceful integration. The book's chronology is somewhat disjointed, the narrative is repetitive, and they get some basic facts wrong. And the subtitle is misleading: The bankers, brokers, and bureaucrats were motivated by profit and power, not social reform; greed, not good intentions.

Also, the book fails to point out how Boston's later struggle over school busing was a direct descendant of the BBURG experience. The racial poisons unleashed by BBURG spilled over into the conflict over school integration in the mid-1970s, best described in J. Anthony Lukas's *Common Ground*. Just as BBURG (and federal housing policy in general) did not require the suburbs to integrate their housing, the court-ordered busing plan left the lily-white suburbs alone. Instead, a federal judge—an Irish-American who lived in suburban Wellesley—ordered Boston to integrate its schools by busing working-class whites (primarily Irish) and poor blacks across the city. Many whites resisted the "invasion" of blacks into their neighborhoods. It is easy to accuse them of racism; but they had watched Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan deteriorate as blacks moved in. They didn't know about BBURG, but they saw its consequences.

Likewise, the authors fail to link BBURG to Boston's more recent

battles over bank redlining. During the 1970s and 1980s, the same banking industry that had already steered unsuspecting black home buyers into segregated neighborhoods then went on to use the neighborhoods' decline as an excuse to withhold conventional mortgages. A recent study found that during those years, Boston banks made almost three times more loans in white neighborhoods than in economically comparable black areas. By denying home-owner loans to credit-worthy consumers, the banks contributed to the further decay of Boston's black neighborhoods.

Fortunately, some lessons were learned. In the late 1970s—in the aftermath of BBURG and a congressional investigation into the program—community activists across the country successfully pressured Congress (and some states) to pass the Community Reinvestment Acts and other anti-redlining laws. These laws provide for greater public scrutiny and accountability in bank lending practices. Using those new tools, neighborhood groups and public officials in Boston and other cities have forced banks to reduce their discriminatory banking practices in inner cities. And during the past decade, in Boston and other cities, community organizations have emerged to engage in grass-roots protest, construct affordable housing, and catalyze job-creating economic development efforts to help rebuild inner-city neighborhoods.

BBURG illustrates the disastrous consequences of private greed and misguided public policy joining forces. But this story was not unique to Boston. Several other books by social scientists and journalists (such as Brian Boyer's *Cities Destroyed for Cash* and Jonathan Reider's *Canarsie*) chronicle similar conflicts in other cities between blacks and working-class whites who competed for turf and resources on a playing field designed in Washington and implemented locally by respectable businesses, shady entrepreneurs, and self-serving political powerbrokers.

Today, too many public officials—from President Bush to Pat Buchanan—still use subtle and overt appeals to racism to deflect attention away from fundamental issues of economic growth and justice. And big business—bankers, developers, and foot-loose global corporations—continue

to play too strong a role in shaping federal policy towards cities. Boston Mayor Ray Flynn, president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, recently told a Senate committee, "Perhaps if cities chartered ourselves as Savings and Loans institutions, we would get the federal help we need." Financially strapped cities are asked to shoulder a larger and larger obligation to provide services to businesses and residents, as well as to the commuters and tourists that swell many populations from nine to five. Cities also bear a disproportionate share of responsibility for helping America's poor and needy, housing the homeless, educating its children, providing health care to the most disadvantaged, securing public safety, and maintaining an aging infrastructure.

Starting with Reagan and continuing with Bush, federal funds for public works, economic development, job training, health and nutrition, schools, and housing have been slashed, while Washington doles out huge tax breaks for the very rich, the Pentagon, the Savings and Loans, and corporate America. If the tax system had not changed since 1977, the treasury today would be collecting \$76 billion more a year in taxes, while three-fourths of all families would pay lower federal taxes than they do now. Rather than sending cities money for vital urban needs, Washington has been sending mandates to local governments requiring them to dig deeper into their almost-empty pockets and to take on even more responsibilities. The current recession has been especially painful for cities, exacerbating the dilemmas faced by municipal officials and residents. Many cities are facing bankruptcy and operating under severe austerity budgets.

We see the consequences of fiscal cutbacks in our cities every day: in the homeless shelters and soup kitchens, which—according to annual U.S. Conference of Mayors surveys—have seen a burgeoning demand for their services each year; and in the unemployment lines, which have swelled dramatically. The real jobless rate—including people who are working part-time or who have given up looking for work—is at least double the current official figure of 7.3 percent. We see also the consequences in the rising rates of infant mortality, which tragically have reached Third

World levels in many urban neighborhoods; and in the faces of the 33 million Americans living in poverty—including more than one in four children—who have little hope that things will improve. And we see it in the growing number of people for whom the basics of the American Dream—owning a home, getting a college education for their children, having access to decent health care, even holding a steady job—are now increasingly out of reach.

The end of the cold war offers us an unprecedented opportunity to reorder America's priorities and put the country's talent and resources to work rebuilding our civilian economy and revitalizing our cities. We need a major investment in jobs and in people to

## BOOK REVIEW

### Family Ties

Richard Kaye

*The Pursuit of Happiness* by Anne Roiphe. Summit Books, 1991, 473 pp.

The family generational novel, once one of the hallmarks of nineteenth-century and early modern fiction, has been almost completely abandoned by serious writers today. However pointless it may be to beat the dead horse of minimalist American fiction, it has to be said that there is still a reigning literary aesthetic that requires most contemporary novelists to forsake large-scale formal and thematic concerns in favor of the pared-down. From the experimental journals, with their postmodern fragmentariness, to the *New Yorker's* puny parables of middle-class angst, a law of contraction dominates. In what might be called a vast conspiracy of littleness, who has the time or energy for the generational saga? Now and then a

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repair our infrastructure, build housing, create a first-rate mass transit system to reduce traffic congestion and improve public health, educate the next generation (from Head Start through college), retool our militarized economy and retrain the workforce, and provide universal access to health care and child care. To promote this agenda, we must restore our democratic institutions and build a broad political coalition to substitute people-power for corporate influence in American political life. That means reforming our campaign finance laws and reshaping our pathwork of voter registration laws.

Economic growth and economic justice *must* go hand-in-hand. We need to expand the nation's economic pie as

well as divide it more fairly. The key to improving our cities is finding common ground across racial lines and urban-suburban boundaries. Whether they recognize it or not, suburbanites have a stake in rebuilding our cities. Whether suburbanites commute to work in the cities or other suburbs, whether or not they utilize the cultural, medical, and educational resources of the cities, the well-being of America's suburbs is still tied to the vitality of the cities.

Suburbanites who ignore the plight of the cities are like a fisherman who claims he doesn't care that his rowboat is leaking at the other end. As Levine and Harmon's book reminds us, we may have come here on different ships, but we're all in the same boat now. □

multifamily epic such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is taken seriously, but (like the four-hour movie) it's the exception that proves the rule. With its family tree included at the book's front for easy reference, its rococo interconnecting plots, and its vast time-span that covers decades in a few pages, the family novel has by now been consigned to the supermarket checkout line.

It's not exactly that intelligent readers don't seem to believe in families as compelling subjects for fiction, but that a key premise of the nineteenth-century novel—family is destiny—has fallen into disrepute. Americans, most especially, have a bigger stake in wishing to view a given character's progress in highly individualistic terms. And so our better novelists have given up on books written in the grand tradition of John Galsworthy's *Forsyte Saga*, Emile Zola's several-volume *Rougon-Macquart* series, and Thomas Mann's *Buddenbrooks*, even as

many readers still hungrily go after the kind of fiction that gets heatedly blurred on book-jackets as "sweeping" and "triumphant."

The novelist Anne Roiphe, drawn to the theme of Jewish success in America yet reluctant to surrender the family novel to the schlock ambitions of a Belva Plain, has written in her newest work, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, precisely the kind of teeming, sprawling epic that high-minded writers are supposed to avoid. In its scope and cumulative emotional power, Roiphe's novel constitutes an impressive act of literary iconoclasm, reminding us of just how much dropped out of fiction when novelists some time ago decided that readers could handle only a single anguished family unit per work of fiction.

The author of the 1970 *Up the Sandbox*, perhaps the first of that decade's many crazy housewife novels and still the funniest, as well as the creator of what is arguably the first female road