Fighting to Preserve a Nation’s Soul: America’s Ecumenical War on Poverty

Carol Walker Jordan

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln

Part of the Library and Information Science Commons

Recommended Citation
Jordan, Carol Walker (2019) "Fighting to Preserve a Nation's Soul: America's Ecumenical War on Poverty," The Southeastern Librarian: Vol. 67 : Iss. 3 , Article 10.
Available at: https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln/vol67/iss3/10

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Southeastern Librarian by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Kennesaw State University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@kennesaw.edu.
Our cities, our states, our regions, our country and the world. Some of our most beautiful and inviting cities now have “tent cities” that have sprung up with homeless families, homeless youth, and homeless refugees. Suffering with disease, hunger and the loss of personal dignity, Americans in poverty is a current national concern. This is 2019 and Robert Bauman takes us back to 1964 and offers us a look at poverty in our country by his research into the ecumenical war on poverty in America.

In this thoughtfully presented text Bauman explains “all aspects of religion’s and government’s role in the struggle against poverty … which included the Roman Catholic Church, mainline Protestant churches, Jewish groups, and ecumenical organizations such as the National Council of Churches” along with the efforts of President Johnson’s declared “War on Poverty” and its “OEO—the Office of Economic Opportunity”.

Emerging from all Bauman’s research is a most interesting chapter, Chapter 4, “The Black Manifesto”, Challenging the Ecumenical Antipoverty Coalition” (p. 87). “At 7 pm, April 26 1969, an unassuming, middle-aged black man, his hair graying at the temples, approached the microphone at the National Black Economic Development Conference, (James Forman) “We have come from all over the country, burning with anger and despair not only with the miserable plight of our people but fully aware that the racism on which the Western World was built dominates our lives.” (p.87)

As his speech goes on, Forman says, “we are therefore demanding of the white Christian churches and the Jewish synagogues, which are part and parcel of the system of capitalism, that they begin to pay reparations to black people in this country. We are demanding $500,000,000 from the Christian white churches and Jewish synagogues,” This became the Black Manifesto, a key document in the history of the civil rights movement. (p.88)

In Bauman’s “Conclusion p. 147-158) he says, “it seems likely that at least for the foreseeable future, anti poverty efforts will remain some sort of church-state hybrid, with religious organizations continuing to play a central role in the delivery of programs… or an ecumenical antipoverty coalition may be the only way in the near future that the War on Poverty will continue to be fought”.

Bauman’s book is recommended for students in social studies, African American studies, religious studies and women’s studies. Also a supplemental resource for assigned readings.

Included for historians and students are the Notes pg.161 to 164, Bibliography 165 to 198, Index to 199 to 208. Illustrations throughout pages 1 to 12.

Carol Walker Jordan
Librarian and Consultant

Homeplace: A Southern Town, a Country Legend, and the Last Days of a Mountaintop Honky-Tonk. John