


Christopher Hayes, *The Harlem Uprising: Segregation and Inequality in Postwar New York City*

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For six days in July 1964, adults and teenagers in Harlem marched, rallied, and at times attacked buildings and property in a mass expression of rage, grievance, and refusal that later spread to Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood. New York City police officers wielded guns, billy clubs, fists, and the jail wagon in their efforts to quell the uprising and demonstrate their own power. As Christopher Hayes shows through his careful and often gripping day-by-day recounting, the unrest was an organic thing, a moving and shifting mass with its own rhythms and pulses far beyond the ability of any one individual or agency to control. It was also a magnification at neighborhood and city scale of a quotidian dynamic: that of New York police surveilling, containing, and at times ending the lives of Black and Puerto Rican young people seeking to exist on the streets of New York. The immediate spark for the uprising came when a summer-school student encountered a doorman and an off-duty police officer. There was a water hose, a knife (or not), and most consequentially, a gun in the police officer's hand. At the end of the incident, James Powell, a Black boy and Harlem resident aged fifteen, was dead.

The July 1964 Harlem uprising is the prompt and pivot for Hayes's book, which aims to do much more than recount the events of those days. Hayes depicts the uprising as one product of a decades-long process of racist disinvestment and oppression that shaped the lives of Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers. The first five chapters ("Living," "Working," "Union Work," "Learning," and "The New York Police Department") paint the background to the Powell killing. Black New Yorkers, the plurality of them living in Harlem, made their lives in the face of overlapping pressures from crumbling yet expensive housing and hard but insecure work. They sent their children to schools that were overcrowded, segregated, and disrespectful of their capabilities, and then feared what would happen when boys and girls encountered police officers on their way home. If white liberals like Mayor Robert Wagner talked of rights and remedies, no real action followed. In these stage-setting chapters, Hayes manages an expansive historiography efficiently and elegantly, providing incisive and well-illustrated summaries. (With one quibble: the depiction of Harlem's education struggles come off as the work of men alone, when in fact so much rested on long-term networks of women's knowledge and labor, as Barbara Ransby, Adina Back, Kristopher Burrell, Johanna Fernandez, Laurie Johnson, Clarence Taylor, and many other scholars have shown.) *The Harlem Uprising* is a potent reminder to look beyond schools to consider the factors conditioning students' and families' lives. Students in school are

laborers' and union members' sons and daughters, subjects of police power arbitrary and organized. Hayes gives us a useful example of how to set that stage in the complex postwar urban landscape.

The proximity of education struggles to the uprising is striking: in February 1964, nearly half a million New York students boycotted their schools to protest segregation and inequality. They repeated the effort, at smaller scale, in March 1964. In April, six Harlem teens were arrested and accused, baselessly, of murder. In June many Harlem youth joined summer programs in arts and culture and history led by community organization HARYOU (Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited) or headed to summer school, as James Powell did. In July, Powell was murdered and the uprising began. Hayes's chapters 6 through 11 pick up from there, giving a day-by-day recounting of the unrest, of the persistent but feeble attempts of Black leaders to limit and channel the protest, and of the steady drumbeat of police violence in response.

The aftermath of the Harlem uprising may be tallied in deaths and dollars. Alongside these, Hayes argues that crucial long-term consequences came in the form of political fracture. The final chapters in the book detail the attempts at policy reform, and their failure, after the uprising quieted. Many Black activists and their allies looked for change in the city's Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB), empowered to review cases of police misconduct. That entity had existed since 1953, but only the complaints were civilian. The three review board members were police officers. Mayor John Lindsay, New York's young liberal Republican governor, modified the board. It became four civilians and four police officers in 1966. And then, the backlash. The police union and its political allies in the working- and middle-class precincts of Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx rose up and placed a referendum on the November ballot preventing any civilian oversight of the police. They succeeded, in a stunning rejection of a most modest effort.

Hayes argues that the 1966 referendum is the moment when New York's Black-labor-left coalition fractures. Historians of education will hear this as a challenge to a familiar chronology. It's not the Ocean Hill-Brownsville community control struggle and subsequent 1968 teacher's strike that "changed New York," as historian Jerold Podair argued in his 2002 book. The break is a few years earlier, and it's in reaction to policing rather than schools. That argument aligns well with the recent and crucial rise of attention to policing and mass incarceration as core modes of racist power and governance in the twentieth-century US, of which this work is a valuable contribution. I am not convinced fully that the CCRB referendum is the new fulcrum, in part because the United Federation of Teachers aligned *with* many civil rights and left organizations in calling for civilian review, even as middle- and working-class whites pulled away, which Hayes recognizes.

The strength of this book is not in its claim for a particular new chronology, but in placing policing at the center of our thinking about the American city in the 1960s. (The special section on policing and schools in *Journal of Urban History* 49, no. 5 (2023), edited by Walter C. Stern with articles by Stern, Menika Dirkson, Deirdre Mayer Dougherty, Max Felker-Kantor, Jon N. Hale and Candace Livingston, Judith Kafka, Matthew B. Kautz, Mahasan Offutt-Chaney, and Noah Remnick, contributes to that effort very well, too.) The violent and pervasive policing of students and young Black and Puerto Rican boys and girls, in particular, is well conveyed in Hayes's work, as is the


readiness of those young people to go to the streets, night after night in July 1964, and push back. Theirs was a message sent from and in pain, and the reply came from white New Yorkers, many of them the working- and middle-class people who had started to organize themselves against school desegregation a few years earlier wearing the mantle of “safety” and “neighborhood schools.” White New Yorkers were the beneficiaries of the city’s unjust and racist distribution of state power, and they would defend that privilege vigorously.

Christopher Hayes has offered a highly readable and evocative rendering of the Harlem uprising of 1964, its causes, and its immediate policy aftermath. As the first of the wave of 1960s summers of unrest—including Watts in 1965 and Washington, DC, and Detroit in 1968, among many others—the Harlem uprising is important as a force in the making of the US city. But Hayes shows us that the uprising provides a distinct window into how education and policing, alongside housing and labor markets, were constraining the lives of Black and Puerto Rican New Yorkers. And how the city’s white majority marshaled new tactics to keep it just that way.

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Seth Kershner, Scott Harding, and Charles Howlett. Breaking the War Habit: The Debate over Militarism in American Education

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Breaking the War Habit explains the development of a complex relationship between the US military and high school students by chronicling the twentieth-century peace activists who tried to prevent its formation and then, failing that, to sever the connection. These activists had limited success, argue the authors, but they were important because they “understood and enacted different visions of education” than the current one, which tightly binds public schools to militarist ideals (p. 11).

This book covers a lot of ground in a short 139 pages of text. Across an introduction and six chapters, the authors move from the origins of peace activism in schools in the 1830s up to the present day. The bulk of work, however, focuses on the two decades following World War I and the three decades following the Vietnam War, when reformers’ messages gained the most traction. In short, opponents of what the authors call “school militarism” argued that military values, such as obedience, regimentation, and violence, were antithetical to the “independent thinking, tolerance, and cooperation” necessary for a thriving democracy (pp. 2, 10). The military—whether via military