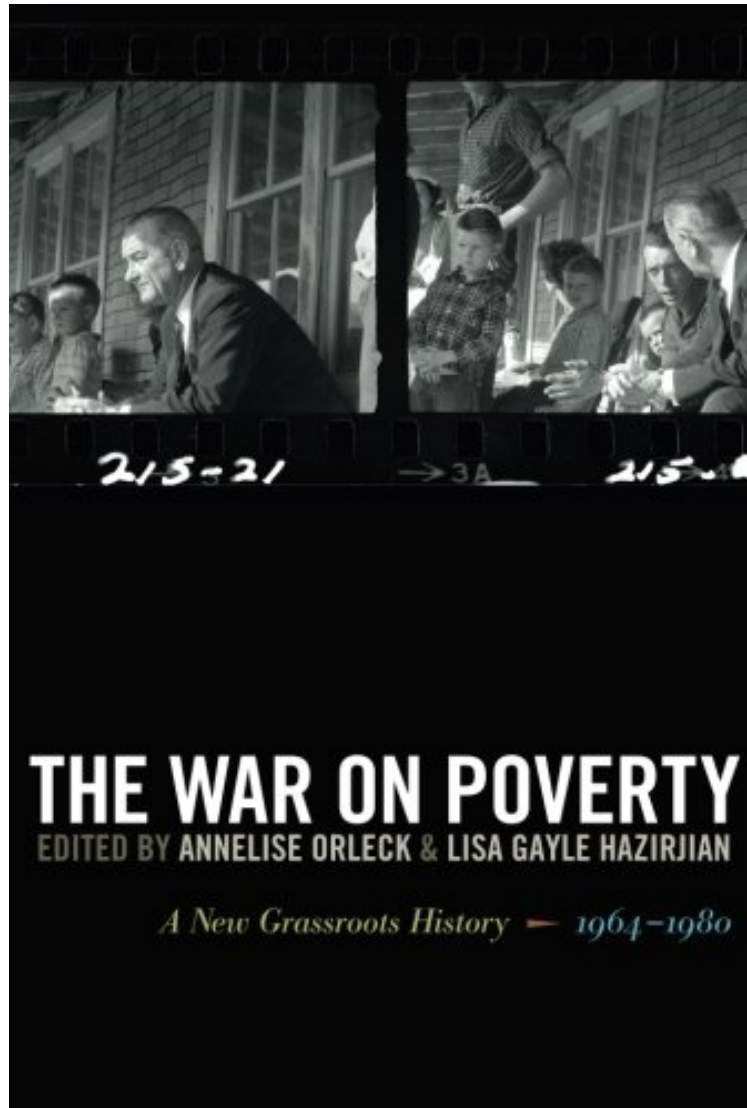


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The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980

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Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty has long been portrayed as the most potent symbol of all that is wrong with big government. Conservatives deride the War on Poverty for corruption and the creation of poverty pimps, and even liberals carefully distance themselves from it. Examining the long War on Poverty from the 1960s onward, this book makes a controversial argument that the programs were in many ways a success, reducing poverty rates and weaving a social safety net that has proven as enduring as programs that came out of the New Deal. The War on Poverty also transformed American politics from the grass roots up, mobilizing poor people across the nation. Blacks in crumbling cities, rural whites in Appalachia, Cherokees in Oklahoma, Puerto Ricans in the Bronx, migrant Mexican farmworkers, and Chinese immigrants from New York to California built social programs based on Johnson's vision of a greater, more just society. Contributors to this volume chronicle these vibrant and largely unknown histories while not shying away from the flaws and failings of the movement including inadequate funding, co-optation by local political elites, and blindness to the reality that mothers and their children made up most of the poor. In the twenty-first century, when one in seven Americans receives food stamps and community health centers are the largest primary care system in the nation, the War on Poverty is as relevant as ever. This book helps us to understand the turbulent era out of which it emerged and why it remains so controversial to this day.

Makes an extremely significant intervention into several literatures on social movements, on domestic policy, and on local government and power structures. It shares both a strong point of view and a clear commitment not to oversimplify or romanticize the grassroots activism it depicts, and this combination makes it convincing and, at times, gripping. The fact that the book treats civil rights activism among Mexican Americans, Indians, and Asian Americans is particularly attractive. (Linda Gordon winner of the Bancroft Prize for *Dorothea Lange: A Life Beyond Limits*) The essays in this exciting collection bring to life the War on Poverty at the grassroots, where it was really fought. They emphasize the interpenetration of the poverty war and civil rights movement and highlight the energy unleashed by the commitment to the 'maximum feasible participation' of the poor. Annelise Orleck's introduction provides one of the best overviews of the War on Poverty ever written, and her stunning conclusion offers a measured, reasoned defense of the programs' achievements and legacy a message needed now more than ever. (Michael B. Katz University of Pennsylvania) Contributors to the volume chronicle vibrant and largely unknown histories while not shying away from the flaws and failings of the movement. . . . This book helps readers to understand the turbulent era out of which it emerged and why it remains so controversial to this day. (Bob Edmonds McCormick Messenger) *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History, 1964-1980* offers a powerful collection key to any social issues collection and covers poverty and civil rights battles at the grassroots level. . . . provides a powerful survey of the movement Johnson began. Very highly recommended! (Midwest Book) [The War on Poverty] is history, not economic or political theory, and its power comes from its empirical approach . . . The stories contained in this volume of how its battles have been lost and won can help us see how it might be fought more successfully in the future. (Duncan Richter *Studies in American Culture*) [A]s these essays collectively argue that the War on Poverty was more successful than historians and certainly most Americans have commonly recognized, [The War on Poverty] makes a valuable and insightful contribution. (Sean P. Cunningham *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*) About the Author Annelise Orleck is a professor of history at Dartmouth College. She is the author or editor of four previous books including "Storming Caesars Palace: How Black Mothers Fought Their Own War on Poverty." Lisa Gayle Hazirjian is an activist and independent scholar.