CYNTHIA M. DUNCAN

WORLDS
Why Poverty Persists in Rural America

APART

with a Foreword by Robert Coles

YALE UNIVERSITY PRESS  NEW HAVEN AND LONDON
Contents

Map of Northern New England, Central Appalachia, and the Mississippi Delta, ii
Foreword by Robert Coles, ix
Preface, xiii
List of People Profiled, xvi

chapter one
Blackwell: Rigid Classes and Corrupt Politics
in Appalachia's Coal Fields 1

"Good Rich People" and "Bad Poor People," 3
Blackwell Yesterday: Developing Appalachia's Coal Fields, 11
The Families That Run Things, 17
The Politics of Work in the Mountains, 30
Blackwell's Have-Not's: Scratching a Living Up the Hollows, 39
Blackwell's Have's: The Good Life on Redbud Hill, 53
Bringing Change to Blackwell, 59

chapter two
Dahlia: Racial Segregation and Planter Control
in the Mississippi Delta 73

Dahlia's Two Social Worlds, 74
Work in Dahlia: Creating and Maintaining the Plantation World, 90
Class and Caste in the Delta, 96
White Planters, Politicians, and Shopkeepers, 111
Leadership in the Black Community: The Old and the New "Toms," 123
Dahlia's Emerging Middle Class, 140
chapter three
Gray Mountain: Equality and Civic Involvement in Northern New England 152
A Blue-Collar Middle-Class Mill Town, 154
Participation and Investment in the 1990s, 164
The Big Middle "Continuum," 177
Difficult Times Ahead: Putting Civic Culture to the Test, 184

chapter four
Social Change and Social Policy 187
Cultural and Structural Causes of Persistent Poverty, 187
Class and Politics in Rural Communities, 191
Equality, Democracy, and Social Change, 198
Policies to Encourage Mobility and Build Civic Culture, 200

Appendix, 209
Notes, 223
Acknowledgments, 229
Index, 231

"There are a lot of voices in the room because success or failure depends on knowing many people, and Walker Percy observed in a compelling novel representing the life enabled by a mix of prudence and defiance, abstract explanatory concepts offered in the pages that follow have traveled wide and far, as have the authors, and then tried to interpret a context that will, in turn, be prompted to speak to the "others" who live among us.

Here is a storytelling social science, a book made, questions answered, conclusions drawn, and social science that connects the world with the witness as well as formulates and deploys coherent and compelling narratives. The intent on immersion in the world is clear, compelling narratives that one whose ideas and aspirations find a home. Here is a social science that is bare and sometimes brute force are the United States but takes a further step still: it is studying to become colleagues and counselors respectfully offered to their clients.

The publication of this book is of great sadness—that the contents of Appalachia and the Mississippi
institutions that have been built as these economic changes are not to the steady middle-class is eroding at the same time, and the responsibility is falling to the effects that inequality and inertia in Blackwell and Dahlia chronic poverty.

chapter four

SOCIAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL POLICY

What do the stories in Blackwell, Dahlia, and Gray Mountain tell us about why some people and places remain trapped in poverty in America? Do they support the thesis that poor people's destructive behavior is the real cause of their poverty? That communities like Blackwell and Dahlia have chronically high poverty rates because there was a brain drain when "those with get-up-and-go got up and went," leaving behind those without education or ambition? Or does the real problem lie with the larger structural forces in society, the way capitalism's free market invariably results in unequal opportunities? The way patterns of racial and class discrimination create impenetrable barriers to mobility?

CULTURAL AND STRUCTURAL CAUSES OF PERSISTENT POVERTY

Throughout the sixties and seventies, the persistence of poverty was explained from either a structural perspective that blames inequalities built into the economic and social system or a cultural perspective that blames individuals' values and behavior.¹ In recent years, urban-poverty scholars have begun to focus on how poverty is perpetuated by the social relationships and institutions in the community.²

The structural argument emphasizes the forces affecting the distribution of opportunities in the national, and even global, economy. Scholars and policymakers have long criticized the way capitalism allocates resources unequally among groups and places, and the way racism has caused persistent disadvantage for black Americans and other minorities.³ A highly
unequal two-class society was established early on in Appalachia's coal fields and the Delta's cotton plantations, and the divisions were exacerbated in the Delta by the extreme racism that condemned blacks to deep poverty. Over the years, as we have seen, the extraordinary power that employers had over workers and that whites had over blacks has maintained this inequality and long-term poverty.

Both the structure of the larger economy and relations between races still matter in the 1990s of course, and these issues have received new attention from analysts in the wake of the economic restructuring that has enveloped the nation since the late 1970s. Economists attribute growing inequality nationwide to declining employment in the goods-producing sector, which provided high wages and benefits to relatively unskilled workers for twenty years after World War II. Furthermore, the expanding service-producing sector is polarized into high-paying professional jobs in business and finance, law, medicine, and technology on one hand and low-wage, menial work in retailing, hospitality, and janitorial services on the other, available to those with limited skills and education. Minorities are especially hurt, in part because racism and segregation over the years have ensured that they are more likely to have few skills and low educational attainment.  

Restructuring of the economy has had a profound effect in rural areas where extractive and goods-producing jobs continue to decline and fewer high-end service jobs emerge at all. Between 1980 and 1990 the proportion of all jobs in natural resources and manufacturing declined from 36 percent to 28 percent in Central Appalachia, from 31 percent to 29 percent in the Delta, and from 37 percent to 27 percent in northern New England, while service-producing jobs increased proportionately. Good jobs continue to be hard to find, and people are still leaving Central Appalachia and the Delta.

But while the larger economy and long-standing racism have produced unequal opportunity, and continue to do so in the 1990s, the stories we have heard suggest that other factors having to do with culture and class at the community level can help us understand the persistence of poverty. From a commonsense point of view, the "culture of poverty" thesis—that the poor, discouraged by their own failures, do not teach their children the values they need to succeed—is compelling. Some of our dominant theories of social action have long assumed that our behavior is shaped by our values, that we act based on what is important to us. If getting ahead is important, then a person works toward that end. Those who are stuck in poverty are those who choose to enjoy immediate pleasures rather than behave responsibly. I

guess that's the way they wanna live."

about the first-of-the-month payments in Blackwell and Dahlia hold true.

The implication is that policies that will help them get ahead will also help the culture of poverty thesis in the individual victim or family.” He saw the poor's failure to change their marginal status in a “class society” where low economic status equates to inferiority,” despite low wages.  

first developed the culture-of-poverty argument why people behaved in ways that will reduce poverty. Political analysts suggest that the inner-city poor were "people who had no liberal reforms could change their lives.” More recently, Lawrence Mead has suggested that high unemployment rates because of deindustrialization often jibes with popular thinking. It has seemed a reasonable explanation for the persistence of poverty—especially when juxtaposed with the argument that ignores the importance of family, school, holding down a job, or the "people may share common values but different in the way culture organizes the world."

Sociologist Ann Swidler suggests that people behave the way they do in order to guide our behavior but rather with a sense of "world-views" that we assemble as in Culture, she says, is "more like cultural preferences or wants.” It is not the case that "People may share common values and different in the way culture organizes the world."

So we make a choice in life, we recognize the costs and benefits, so we can, to use sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's phrase, "us do. Swidler gives the example..."
early on in Appalachia’s coal the divisions were exacerbated because blacks to deep poverty, ordinary power that employers or blacks has maintained this

and relations between races still have received new attention restructuring that has enveloped a growing inequality goods-producing sector, which unskilled workers for twenty expanding service-producing sional jobs in business and fiend hand and low-wage, menial services on the other, available minorities are especially hurt, in t years have ensured that they educational attainment.

profound effect in rural areas continue to decline and fewer 1980 and 1990 the proportion uiring declined from 36 percent 31 percent to 29 percent in the northern New England, while ately. Good jobs continue to be Appalachia and the Delta. standing racism have produced the 1990s, the stories we have lo with culture and class at the persistence of poverty. From a poverty” thesis—that the poor, teach their children the values of our dominant theories of soior is shaped by our values, that tting ahead is important, then a are stuck in poverty are those other than behave responsibly. I

guess that’s the way they want to live, a young man in Blackwell had said about the first-of-the-monthers who depend on welfare. Most of the have in Blackwell and Dahlia hold this view about the poverty of the have-nots.

The implication is that people are poor because they reject behavior that will help them get ahead. Anthropologist Oscar Lewis developed the culture-of-poverty thesis in the 1960s to shift attention from the “personality of the individual victim of poverty” to the “slum community and family.” He saw the poor’s failure to act responsibly as a rational adaptation to their marginal status in a “class-stratified, highly individuated, capitalist society” where low economic status is attributed to “personal inadequacy and inferiority,” despite low wages and high unemployment. In other words, he first developed the culture-of-poverty idea as a sympathetic theory explaining why people behaved in ways that hindered their escape from poverty. Later the culture-of-poverty thesis became part of a victim-blaming analysis that attributed poverty’s persistence to the poor’s cultural values.

For some conservative social theorists and policymakers who subscribe to the culture-of-poverty thesis, the obvious implication is that no policy will reduce poverty. Political scientist Edward Banfield, for example, wrote that the inner-city poor were oriented toward pleasure in the present, and no liberal reforms could change those self-destructive attitudes and values. More recently, Lawrence Mead has argued that inner-city youths have high unemployment rates because they choose idleness over work. Since this explanation often jibes with popular impressions about how the poor behave, it has seemed a reasonable explanation for why some people are trapped in poverty—especially when juxtaposed with the more abstract structural argument that ignores the importance of responsible behavior like finishing school, holding down a job, or waiting to have children until marriage.

Sociologist Ann Swidler suggests that we can better understand why people behave the way they do if we think of culture not as values that guide our behavior but rather as a “tool-kit of symbols, stories, rituals, and world-views” that we assemble as we grow up and experience the world. Culture, she says, is “more like a set of skills and habits than a set of preferences or wants.” It is not so much our values but what we know: “People may share common aspirations, while remaining profoundly different in the way culture organizes their overall pattern of behavior.” When we make a choice in life, we reach into our tool kit and select familiar tools so we can, to use sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s phrase, do what people “like us” do. Swidler gives the example of a “slum youth” who is asked why he
does not do what is necessary to become a doctor. He never says he does not want to be a doctor. He says, "Who, me?" He cannot even imagine being a doctor. It would take a style, skills and habits, experiences and know-how that are not in his tool kit. We can imagine Wanda Turner in Blackwell or Caroline Gage in Dahlia responding in just the same way. *Me?*

The insight captured in Swidler’s metaphor is that our tool kits are shaped by what we experience in the social world, by the relationships we have and by the larger community context in which those relationships occur. As children our social world is our family, and we get our sense of who we are and who we can become from what our parents and other relatives tell us and show us. This process of socialization is something we all experience and recognize, and it is why we so often look to families to provide the foundation for future success. When we are older, we venture out into the neighborhood and into school, where friends and teachers give us more information about how the world works, what the rules are, and how we, and our families, fit. Through our social relationships—first in our families, then in our neighborhoods and social networks, later in social institutions and organizations like schools, youth groups, and workplaces, we acquire the habits and skills, stories and view of the world that we use when we make decisions about how to act.

This understanding is why we often expect schools to compensate for the lack of family resources available to poor children. It also helps explain why mentors can help low-income youths overcome disadvantages and envision a positive future for themselves. Over the past ten years, more and more scholars have applied this understanding about the important role played by the community, or the effects of the “neighborhoods,” in studies of poor children and youths.

Sociologist William Julius Wilson has led this theoretical development, arguing that urban poverty persists because of the combined, interacting effects of joblessness, deteriorating neighborhoods, and the "oppositional" culture these forces generate. He argues that inner-city poverty was exacerbated during the 1970s and 1980s when work disappeared from their communities and the poor became more isolated from the mainstream. Urban communities like Chicago lost good blue-collar jobs to the suburbs and overseas locations. At the same time, stable working-class families were moving out because antidiscrimination laws opened up suburban housing to African-Americans and affirmative action created new employment opportunities for many college-educated minorities.

Since fewer people in the neighborhood had fewer connections for teens. A decline in the number of two-parent homes and a decline in the percentage of teenagers received less supervision from workers and parents. Crucial community institutions, like neighborhood stores, and churches, began to breakdown; the middle-class families had to work together. The depressed conditions meant that poor youth were more vulnerable to leaving school or have children; the process as a combination of structural factors and the fallacy connecting acquisition of one's culture.

Social isolation deprives residents not only of resources and conveniences, but also of the sense of neighborhoods. The lack of neighborhood may not include the conventional role models, and so it may not produce outcomes...that result.

Poor men and women in Blackwell and Wilson describes the social isolation that Wilson described as scarce, and people from bad family paying jobs. The behavior of your behavior is similar to that of Inner-city poverty, poor children out of wedlock, “run away” youth, and their segregation by class and race, and the social relationships with the have.
doctor. He never says he does not
He cannot even imagine being a
bits, experiences and know-how
Wanda Turner in Blackwell or
st the same way. Me?
taphor is that our tool kits are
al world, by the relationships we
ext in which those relationships
family, and we get our sense of
om what our parents and other
of socialization is something we
y we so often look to families to
When we are older, we venture
where friends and teachers give
works, what the rules are, and
social relationships—first in our
social networks, later in social
, youth groups, and workplaces,
d view of the world that we use
ect schools to compensate for the
children. It also helps explain why
ome disadvantages and envision
past ten years, more and more
about the important role played
ghborhoods,” in studies of poor
ed this theoretical development,
e of the combined, interacting
hoods, and the “oppositional”
inner-city poverty was exacer-
rk disappeared from their com-
d from the mainstream. Urban
collar jobs to the suburbs and
le working-class families were
opened up suburban housing
created new employment op-

Since fewer people in the neighborhoods were working, the disadvan-
taged had fewer connections for getting jobs and fewer positive role mod-
els. A decline in the number of two-parent families meant that children and
Teenagers received less supervision and needed to survive on smaller family
incomes. Crucial community institutions like schools, recreation centers,
neighborhood stores, and churches that depend on resources provided by
stable working- and middle-class residents declined or disappeared al-
together. The depressed conditions and disorganized neighborhoods meant
that poor youths were more vulnerable to gangs and drugs, as well as more
likely to leave school or have children out of wedlock. Wilson describes the
process as a combination of structural, psychological, and cultural effects,
connecting acquisition of one’s cultural tool kit to community conditions.

Social isolation deprives residents of inner-city neighborhoods not
only of resources and conventional role models, whose former pre-
seence buffered the effects of neighborhood joblessness, but also of the
kind of cultural learning from mainstream social networks that facili-
tates social and economic advancement in modern industrial society.
The lack of neighborhood material resources, the relative absence of
conventional role models, and the circumscribed cultural learning
produce outcomes . . . that restrict social mobility.10

Poor men and women in Blackwell and Dahlia experience the same
social isolation that Wilson describes in parts of urban America. Jobs are
scarce, and people from bad families, like they are, do not have steady, well-
paying jobs. The behavior of young people in Blackwell and Dahlia is often
similar to that of inner-city poor youth—they drop out of school, have
children out of wedlock, “run wild,” and depend on welfare. But despite
their segregation by class and race, they are embedded, as we have seen, in
social relationships with the haves.

CLASS AND POLITICS IN
RURAL COMMUNITIES

The social structure of these chronically poor Appalachian and Delta com-
munities is made up, fundamentally, of two classes: upper-class families
that control the resources and participate in mainstream economic and
political life, and lower-class families that are powerless, dependent, and do not participate. The poverty of the have-nots is inseparable from the privilege of the haves. As historian E. P. Thompson has put it, class is something which in fact happens (and can be shown to have happened) in human relationships... The relationship must always be embodied in real people and in a real context. Moreover, we cannot have two distinct classes, each with an independent being, and then bring them into relationship with each other. We cannot have love without lovers, nor deference without squires and labourers. And class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born—or enter involuntarily.\textsuperscript{11}

Studying rural communities offers advantages for making the connection between the face-to-face relations and common experiences people have and larger social processes involving structures of class and power. Rural communities like Blackwell, Dahlia, and Gray Mountain are a “micro” social world where we can see people from different social classes and racial groups interact, and even track the evolution of these relations over time. Class and race relations “happen” within the boundaries of a coherent place, and people have direct experience with how they matter, with their consequences for the families they know.\textsuperscript{12}

Contemporary social patterns and norms in Blackwell and Dahlia are anchored in the way the economy was organized a century ago. The extraordinary power of coal barons or plantation bosses played out in actions that became part of social life and eventually social history. One day a coal operator set up a company store and required miners to shop there, or a plantation bossman told his workers their children would continue to pick cotton, and miss school, even after the plantation schools were closed. Maybe during an election in Blackwell the owner of a coal company hand-picked the sheriff, who then ran out unruly laborers interested in organizing a union. Maybe a sharecropper who questioned the bossman’s handling of his account was evicted and blackballed from employment. Over time these decisions, rules, and experiences that are grounded in the structure of class power and racial oppression become patterns that people are always done. They form the core of the community. These relationships and norms who benefit from them, but they are also a record of people's decisions and accommodations, and not just records but also in peoples' decisions about the structure of daily life that takes place. Because new ideas and new responses that the powerful have deliberately undertaken in the larger society, people form the relationships and norms they know who they become and how they see a community. When people in Blackwell see inequality, they are likely to face it also are distrusted by those who have it.

While the poor in Appalachia have part-time jobs and ignored in discrusional politics and personal whims of a “rural suburbia.” In Dahlia they, in Blackwell to the independent producers and their neighbors, they support school and families. They know one another and they devote themselves above all to the everyday experience of their lives include all the good things of familiarity, neighborliness, safety, dignity, and their own social class, their everyday lives common with the good relations every day.

But in Blackwell and Dahlia, government workers, and salespeople occupations hold themselves apart from each other and put themselves in a group with those who often envy, and distinguish themselves as lazy and deviant. They disapprove of them as productive members of the
powerless, dependent, and do
is inseparable from the priv	on has put it, class is
an be shown to have hap
relationshhip must always be	text. Moreover, we cannot
dependent being, and then
ther. We cannot have love
quires and labourers. And
lt of common experiences
identity of their interests
men whose interests are
eirs. The class experience is
ations into which men are

ges for making the connection
experiences people have and
class and power. Rural com
mountain are a "micro" social
rent social classes and racial
of these relations over time.
boundaries of a coherent place,
they matter, with their conse
in Blackwell and Dahlia are
ized a century ago. The ex
ation bossmen played out in
ually social history. One day
quired miners to shop there, or
children would continue to
lantation schools were closed.
wer of a coal company hand
aborers interested in organi
ond the bossman's handling
from employment. Over time
grounded in the structure of
class power and racial oppression and define how people relate to one
another become patterns that people expect, norms governing how things
are always done. They form the civic culture in the community.

These relationships and norms are reinforced by overt action of those
who benefit from them, but they are also maintained through memory and
tradition, reputation and family history. People know one another's fami-
ilies across generations, their good deeds and bad, power and vulnerability,
successes and failures. Boom and bust cycles in the economy, acts of re-
sistance and accommodation, are recorded not only in official historical
records but also in peoples' decisions about work, family, or migration. The
structure of daily life that takes shape over time is taken for granted.
Because new ideas and new resources rarely penetrate this environment
that the powerful have deliberately kept closed off—worlds apart—from
the larger society, people form their cultural tool kit in the context of the
relationships and norms they know. Their immediate social context shapes
who they become and how they see their options, both as individuals and as
a community. When people in Blackwell or Dahlia question the patterns of
inequality, they are likely to face retribution from those in power, but they
also are distrusted by those who have accepted life as it is.

While the poor in Appalachia and the Delta are trapped in dead-end,
part-time jobs and ignored in disorganized schools, vulnerable to the inter-
nal politics and personal whims of managers, the haves live comfortably in
a "rural suburbia." In Dahlia they send their children to the private school,
in Blackwell to the independent public school in the county seat. With their
neighbors, they support school and church programs that benefit their own
families. They know one another, look out for each other's children, and
devote themselves above all to their families and churches. In many ways
their lives include all the good things we look for in small-community life—
familiarity, neighborliness, safety, an unhurried pace. In fact, within their
own social class, their everyday lives and relationships have much in com-
mon with the good relations everyone talks about in Gray Mountain.

But in Blackwell and Dahlia, professionals, small-business owners, gov-
ernment workers, and salespeople who have middle-class incomes or oc-
cupations hold themselves apart from the disadvantaged. They consciously
put themselves in a group with the very wealthy, whom they emulate and
often envy, and distinguish themselves from the poor, whom they deride as
lazy and deviant. They disapprove of how the poor behave and do not view
them as productive members of their community. They see them seek out
charity, both public and private, rather than take a job mowing lawns or bagging groceries. They see young people in these families drop out of school, have children out of wedlock, abuse alcohol or drugs, get in trouble with the law—self-destructive behavior that confirms their notion that the poor have thrown opportunity away rather than been denied it. They do not want their children to associate with poor kids, and they deliberately maintain a two-class system.

When middle-income families ally themselves with the rich and powerful and safeguard their privileges and control, there is no group that holds local politicians or private employers accountable for good, fair government or just labor practices. There is no group investing time and money to build strong public institutions like schools, recreation facilities and programs, or libraries. Potential middle-class families look out for their own interests, and they do so through separate institutions and activities. They accept the corruption and patronage, watch out for their own families' well-being, and do not challenge the status quo. Consequently, their alliance with the elite and deliberate segregation affect not just the poor but the nature of the whole community.

The resulting distrust and greed that people perceive in public and private life prevent cooperation. Participation and open politics are discouraged, sometimes in subtle ways, other times through deliberate punishment of the activists and their family members. Investment in public, collective community goods is neglected or consciously eschewed. The poor are scorned and stigmatized, blamed for the failure of the public schools that supposedly serve them, and vulnerable to the politicians and powerful families who control scarce jobs. They do not have the economic independence and political clout necessary to change the public schools and other public programs that can make up for what their families lack. They have never had the experience of participating in an open, honest system—for this too is missing from their tool kit. When communities are rigidly divided by class, as in Blackwell, or by race and class, as in Dahlia, upward mobility is blocked and community change is thwarted.

These class and racial divisions, the atmosphere of distrust, and patterns of corruption emerged from the historical organization of local economies and from relationships evolving over time. In the early days of Appalachia's coal economy and the Delta's plantation economy, operators and bosses maintained tight control over workers—not just in the workplace but in every dimension of social and private life. Workers were discouraged or acted out their frustrations in plantation stores where workers were seldom employed, enjoyed little support and meager resource enforcement, and complete control. When challenged the system was punished with the laws and American ideology of equal opportunity, no outside forces. Poor people learned that the first thing was to do was experience the freedom and independence that Albert O. Hirschman terms for millions of workers, those who gained an education and experience to leave, forced to choose "exit" or stay behind. In Dahlia remained entrenched.

In contrast, Gray Mountain had a tradition of participation, and steady, ongoing social relations and patterns were present. Workers lived in the same town next to the workers and service providers and invested in education and culture because they saw it as good for business and community. They developed community-wide commitment to agriculture, industry, and volunteerism. Diverse people with rich cultural traditions and active in the community. Workers' participation in community life was widespread.

Thus we see greater equality and
take a job mowing lawns or in these families drop out of alcohol or drugs, get in trouble and are denied it. They do poor kids, and they deliberately

selves with the rich and powerful, there is no group that holds table for good, fair government
testing time and money to build steps. facilities and programs, or ok out for their own interests, an activities. They accept the
their own families’ well-being, quently, their alliance with the st the poor but the nature of the

people perceive in public and tion and open politics are dism es through deliberate punish memers. Investment in public, nately eschewed. The poor
 failure of the public schools to the politicians and powerful ot have the economic indepen de the public schools and other : their families lack. They have n an open, honest system—for /then communities are rigidly and class, as in Dahlia, upward is thwarted.

sphere of distrust, and patterns organization of local economies in the early days of Appalachia’s growth, operators and busmen

every dimension of social and political life. Community organizations of workers were discouraged or actively repressed. There were company and plantation stores where workers became indebted. Education was given little support and meager resources. And corrupt politics, arbitrary law enforcement, and complete control were firmly established. Those who challenged the system were punished. Although these actions went against the laws and American ideology that guaranteed democratic rules and equal opportunity, no outside force effectively intervened.

Poor people learned that the way to get along was to accept the way things were, to do what was expected of them, to not speak out or make waves. The combination of ignorance and fear of repercussions made the poor prey to and, often, participants in a corrupt system. Those who did not accept the status quo found themselves ostracized or openly encouraged to leave, forced to choose “exit” over “voice,” to use development scholar Albert O. Hirschman’s terms for migration and political activism. In most cases those who gained an education had to leave to find decent work and to experience the freedom and independence to which they had come to feel entitled. The inequality and political grip of the powerful in Blackwell and Dahlia remained entrenched.

In contrast, Gray Mountain has benefited from trust, widespread participation, and stable, ongoing community investment. Again, different social relations and patterns were established early. Industry leaders lived in town next to the workers and sent their children to the same schools. They invested in education and culture for adults as well as children—in part because they saw it as good for business and in part because it fit their sense of community responsibility—and thus established civic norms of philanthropy and volunteerism. Diverse ethnic groups brought and maintained rich cultural traditions and active social organizations, run by and for workers. These organizations supplied real, material help like access to credit and health care. Just as important, they established habits of widespread participation. Steady work in a stable industry, combined with community-wide commitment to education, laid the foundation of a broad, independent, blue-collar middle class. This middle class, together with the civic responsibility demonstrated by the mill owners’ investments and the workers’ participation in community organizations, created a rich civic culture.

Thus we see greater equality and participation from the early days of the
mill town through to the present. People today say they live in a community where differences are small and unimportant. Local business leaders feel a sense of responsibility to the community, and in their businesses and their community work they value trust and the lack of guile. The five women who work together to establish programs in Gray Mountain have a sense of belonging that comes with their collaboration with one another and their investment in the broader community. Mill workers and carpenters are involved in community organizations, helping to rebuild the hockey arena or put up a new playground, holding the school board accountable and ensuring strong programs that serve everyone’s children. Trust, participation, and public investment emerged here in the late 1800s and have been sustained by a large middle class that is committed to the community as a whole.

When Gwen Boggs, the fast-food worker raising children in Blackwell, and Caroline Gage, the sewing factory worker raising children in Dahlia, matured and recognized that they had “messed up,” as they would put it, and wanted to make a better life for their children, they faced formidable obstacles. They still looked and talked differently from those in the mainstream, and they had no social connections to employers in places where connections are everything. After all, they had grown up in an isolated hollow and a remote plantation where life had been hard in small, crowded, substandard houses. When they went to school, teachers and students reminded them that they were from poor families, that their daddies and mamas did not succeed. School was chaotic and even dangerous, and little learning went on. Neither was encouraged to finish school.

Gwen, Caroline, and others like them never acquired the cultural tool kit and social contacts that would permit them to walk the bridge to the world of steady workers and stable families. They were left behind. Even now, when they want more for their children, they do not feel they have the experience and contacts they would need to improve their children’s schools. What is more, the civic culture discourages such activism: if they raise questions about the school’s failures, there may be repercussions and they might lose what little they have. Opportunities in Blackwell and Dahlia are controlled by the haves for the have-nots.

Deborah Shannon, the young dropout who had a child out of wedlock in Gray Mountain, did get a second chance. She came from a troubled family, her father was an alcoholic, her mother relied on welfare for many years, and hard family times got her out of school as soon as she could. John Martin benefited from family that was in the social context in her community, and because Gray Mountain is open to the middle class, provided real opportunity, and developed a cultural tool kit that permitted her as an adult. Here the poor are not different and inferior. Instead of merit is more likely to guide them to realize her goals and strive for her highest.

We know from seeing a few years of poverty that generous individuals can get out from under the distress of John Martin benefited from family that was a real inspiration to her, Caroline. These mentors played the same role as Jeff Berk and Dan Tourneau, both successful on Gray Mountain—they were kind, for potential beyond someone’s family but also useful of others in Blackwell and Dahlia. Also, others in Dahlia and Dahlia carry on this role.

But in Gray Mountain the average coach is the norm, the way that community is the norm, the way that is development, cooperation, and understanding on the civic culture. And that civic culture grew in a community where the organizations matter, and can help a community develop relationships over time that maintain social life. The constellation of context they relate, and how they see the development of community culture in which origin in Dahlia, the rigid two-class structure, engendered, played a crucial role in Blackwell, while in Gray Mountain it expanded Deborah’s.
Expanded Opportunities.

spread participation in these groups—social groups that were often active in politics and were known as "social groups." In some cases, participation in these groups led to the establishment of community colleges and universities, which played a significant role in the development of social movements and political activism. These groups were often organized around issues related to education, labor, and community development.

For example, the "Social Movement," a group that was formed in the 1960s, played a significant role in the fight for civil rights and against racism. The movement was led by African American activists who sought to challenge the existing power structures and promote social change.

In contrast, traditional social movements focused on specific issues such as labor, education, and healthcare. These movements were led by organized labor unions, community organizations, and political parties. They were often characterized by a more formal structure and a focus on specific policies and issues.

The movement towards social change was not limited to the United States. Across the world, people were organizing and mobilizing to fight for social justice and equality. In many countries, social movements were formed around issues related to human rights, women's rights, and environmentalism.

In conclusion, the study of social change is important for understanding the dynamics of political mobilization and social movements. By examining the strategies and tactics used by different groups, we can gain insights into the processes of social change and the ways in which different social movements have achieved their goals.
SOCIAL CHANGE

to—instilled social trust and habits of cooperation that spill over into the rest of community life, creating the conditions for good government and for economic prosperity.16

In contrast, communities in southern Italy have always been characterized by what he calls “vertical” relationships—patronage and personalistic allocation of opportunities, and a concentration of power among landowners who maintain rigid control over peasants. Here there was not widespread participation in small groups, and, as Banfield had argued many years earlier, people looked out only for their own families, not for other community members.17

More “horizontal” relations, of course, are possible when there is a more equitable class structure in which power and wealth are not concentrated; “vertical” relations characterize places with high inequality. In southern Italy, the economic and political systems were driven by patronage (where a powerful few give out favors and opportunities to those whom they select), and clientelism (where those at the bottom owe allegiance to those at the top). Gray Mountain clearly resembles Putnam’s northern Italy case, whereas Blackwell and Dahlia follow the patterns he found in southern Italy. Putnam found the roots of these differences back as far as the 1100s, concluding that “social patterns plainly traceable from early medieval Italy to today turn out to be decisive in explaining why, on the verge of the twenty-first century, some communities are better able than others to manage collective life and sustain effective institutions.”18

The southern towns, dominated by large landholders in a feudal system, had a small, powerless middle class of administrators, while the northern towns developed a communal republicanism that included a system of covenants and contracts. In the north, people were citizens rather than servants, and they formed groups such as guilds and associations. Civic commitment and civic engagement were practiced in these groups and in governing, and the ensuing predictable “civil order” gave merchants the confidence they needed to invest and trade. The northern communities thrived. He concludes, “communities did not become civic because they were rich. The historical record strongly suggests precisely the opposite. They became rich because they were civic.”19

The implication seems to be that the habits and norms of a good civic society in Italy have their roots in medieval times. Indeed, one local reformer in southern Italy called Putnam’s conclusions “counsel for despair,” since they imply that “the fate of the reform was sealed centuries ago.”20
Putnam believes the lesson is that social context matters: "Where the regional soil is fertile, the regions draw sustenance from regional traditions, but where the soil is poor, the new institutions are stunted." The new structure of regional governments did not bring the southern communities in line with the north because they first need to build "a more civic community," something that, he concludes, must happen through "local transformation of local structures rather than reliance upon national initiatives." As a political scientist interested in how to "make democracy work," Putnam is struck by the powerful impact that long-standing cultural patterns have on contemporary institutions. But by focusing on the importance of these civic norms rather than their foundation in the class structure, he mistakenly concludes that the key that will unlock change lies in the local community. The evidence from Blackwell and Dahlia suggests that, on the contrary, changes at the local level often require outside intervention to break the lock on social affairs held by the haves.

The rich civic culture that makes northern Italy prosperous and Gray Mountain a place where the poor have a better change of escaping poverty is not just a historical happenstance or an inevitable, natural outcome based on traditions that were inherently more cooperative. The civic norms emerged from a certain political economy and the social relations that economy generated. When a few families wield great power over economic and political life, as they do in Blackwell, Dahlia, and southern Italy, they have the power to maintain the social arrangements and community norms that benefit them. Putnam is right that a new form of government cannot immediately change the effects of class relations developed over centuries. But it is also true that local efforts, even when people have the courage to undertake them, can be stopped, compromised, or commandeered by powerful elites in these places. Local efforts alone have not brought about change. Places like Blackwell and Dahlia, or southern Italy, need a significant outside intervention to provide the fulcrum that can unseat the long-standing social relations and civic norms that block change and perpetuate poverty.

POLICIES TO ENCOURAGE MOBILITY AND BUILD CIVIC CULTURE

In the early 1960s, when President Johnson's Commission on Rural Poverty wrote its report, *The People Left Behind*, and when Gwen Boggs and Car-
context matters: "Where the re-
nance from regional traditions,
tions are stunted." The new-
ing the southern communities
be "a more civic commu-
nappen through "local transfor-
ance upon national initiatives."22
make democracy work," Put-
long-standing cultural patterns
focusing on the importance of
ation in the class structure, he
unlock change lies in the local
and Dahlia suggests that, on the
quire outside intervention to
ern Italy prosperous and Gray-
er change of escaping poverty is
able, natural outcome based on
ative. The civic norms emerged
ual relations that economy gen-
ver over economic and political
thern Italy, they have the power
munity norms that benefit
vernment cannot immediately
ed over centuries. But it is also
ave the courage to undertake
anded by powerful elites in
ought about change. Places like
 significant outside interven-
 the long-standing social rela-
perpetuate poverty.

MOBILITY AND CULTURE
Commission on Rural Poverty
ed when Gwen Boggs and Car-
oline Gage were little children, social conditions were appalling in rural
America.22 Nearly a third of all rural Americans (75 percent in Dahlia and
50 percent in Blackwell) lived in poverty. Houses were substandard, access
to health care was rare, and education for the poor was minimal. Caroline
Gage recalls that their little two-room house was hot in the summer and
cold in the winter. Gwen Boggs and Randy Perkins remember having to live on
beans and potatoes month after month. Joanne and John Martin talk of
children who had never seen a doctor. Black leaders describe being pulled
out of school to work in the fields while white children rode by in the school
bus. Everyone recalls one-room schoolhouses with neither heat nor trained
teachers as common for the children of poor Appalachian mountaineers
and Delta sharecroppers.

In many ways, things have improved a great deal in these poor rural
communities. Rural poverty is down to 16 percent, in part because so many
were forced out by mechanization and left in the 1960s for industrial jobs in
growing urban areas. Today, Gwen's trailer and Caroline's house have
electricity and indoor plumbing. School, such as it is, is available to all black
children in Dahlia year round. These improvements were largely the result
of federally funded public investments in infrastructure, housing, and wa-
ter through the Department of Agriculture's Farmers Home Administra-
tion, for example, and federal civil rights laws guaranteeing blacks an equal
education.

But as we enter the twenty-first century, nearly nine million Americans
live in poverty in rural areas, one third in communities with persistently
high poverty rates such as Blackwell and Dahlia—places still left behind.23
The poor who live in these communities, like their inner-city counterparts,
do not participate in the American promise, and their diminished life
chances and lack of economic productivity represent the most significant
failure of domestic policy in the United States over the past thirty-five
years. Alleviating poverty is not a high priority for today's policymakers.
Rather we focus our attention on ways to end welfare dependency and
move people into the workforce, with surprisingly little discussion about
the need to widen opportunities so that those born into poor families can
someday leave poverty behind.

National studies show that inequality is growing in America. The Cen-
ter on Budget and Policy Priorities, a national research organization that
analyzes social trends and policy, reports that the incomes of the richest fifth
of American families increased by 30 percent between the late 1970s and
mid-1990s, while the incomes of the poorest fifth of families with children declined by 21 percent. International trade, global labor markets, a declining manufacturing sector, and technological changes have brought about a growing gap between the upper-middle-class professionals who have high-skilled, high-paying jobs—America’s have—and the working poor in the lower class who make up the have-nots.26

Leading scholars and policymakers warn that growing inequality may threaten the whole American social fabric.25 The stories we have heard in these rural communities give us a firsthand picture of the perils of inequality and the way it can undermine the public sector on which the poor must rely to improve their life chances. Life in Gray Mountain shows the benefits of greater equality, where a large middle class is committed to common public goods, while the social context in Blackwell and Dahlia illustrates the way inequality erodes even basic democracy and undermines equal opportunity. These stories help us better understand the social context and the dynamics of poverty in rural areas, and we can appreciate the conditions that nourish a rich civic culture.

Can we use what we have learned to break the cycle of dependency and vulnerability in these chronically poor areas? Are there policies that can counteract the trends toward greater inequality and an effectively class-segregated society? Are there policies that would affect the seemingly intractable poverty we see in Blackwell and Dahlia?

Scholars and policy analysts William Julius Wilson, Theda Skocpol, Sheldon Danziger and Peter Gottschalk, Rebecca Blank, Robert Reich, and Mickey Kaus have argued for investment in broad, universal social provisions that support families and provide public work as a strategy for dealing with poverty. Wilson, Danziger and Gottschalk, and Kaus stress the need for a new public works program, along the lines of the Works Progress Administration of the New Deal, to ensure that employment is available. Skocpol and Blank place special emphasis on the need for programs that put a floor under all families to protect them from unemployment and health problems and facilitate their education and training. Kaus, following political theorist Michael Walzer, describes his vision as “civic liberalism”—investment in the public sector to counter trends toward inequality in a market-driven, postindustrial economy shaped by global corporations. He argues for public investment in the “egalitarian public sphere of life,” describing this as “a public, community sphere—where money doesn’t ‘talk,’ where the principles of the marketplace (i.e. rich beats poor) are replaced by the principle of equality about distributing and redistributing, about rebuilding, preserving, and augmenting the nation’s civic culture”25—increased federal investment in public sector trends toward devolution of social programs to the states, interest in privatization and market-oriented solutions. Nonetheless, they call for broad, inclusive, universal programs that ensure political support for the poor, including “family security programs,” also known as universal public assistance payments, as an essential to garner broad-based political support. “The history of the United States demonstrates that Americans are willing to support investments toward public programs that benefit themselves, their families, and their friends.”

Investment in public goods especially in education, health care, and family support would help reduce poverty in Gwen Boggs’s family. While it does not matter as much who the employers are, while they are steady jobs with good benefits. A good example is John Cooper in Dahlia and Virginia, who were desperate for steady work and good benefits. Sharon and Edward Carter, and higher wages at their new fast-food job, and her absence, is part of what determines who gets what and how. Families best served by a minimal public sector, while those in the lower class want an allocation of resources to include...
fth of families with children in labor markets, a decline in wages and their benefits is committed to common the stories we have heard in the perils of inequality in which the poor must Mountain shows the benefits growing inequality may rstand the social context and and can appreciate the conditions for broad, universal policies to bridge class and race divides and to ensure political support in the long run. Wilson, for example, says it is crucial that these opportunities be "aimed at broad segments of the U.S. population, not just inner-city workers, in order to provide the needed solid political base of support." Skocpol, in making her case for a new "family security program," also argues that "universal" provisions are essential to garner broad-based political support from cross-class coalitions to fund the programs: "The history of the modern social security system demonstrates that Americans will accept taxes that they perceive as contributions toward public programs in which there is a direct stake for themselves, their families, and their friends, not just for 'the poor.'" Investment in public goods especially benefits those with fewer resources. A stronger, more comprehensive public sphere that provided work and family support would help the poor in Blackwell and Dahlia. Of course, it is in Gwen Bogg's family's best interests to have public health insurance, while it does not matter as much to Donna and Jim Campton, who have steady jobs with good benefits. A public works project would greatly benefit John Cooper in Dahlia and Virgil Bratcher in Blackwell, both of whom are desperate for steady work and economic independence. It matters little to Sharon and Edward Carter, and might even mean they would have to pay higher wages at their new fast-food restaurant. Public investment, or its absence, is part of what determines the social arrangements—our rules for who gets what and how. Families in the upper class often see their interests best served by a minimal public sector and as much local control as possible, while those in the lower class want the social arrangements that govern the allocation of resources to include more public goods. When middle-class
families make up the majority, as they do in Gray Mountain, they see investment in the public sector being in their families' best interests, and poor families benefit because they too participate in the institutions the middle class builds for its own families.

We have seen how the people in Gray Mountain put resources into public schools and public parks and public hockey rinks. A place where inequality is not great and civic norms are inclusive, like Gray Mountain, is more likely to make local decisions to invest in a public sector that is open to everyone regardless of social class. But national resources and, perhaps more important, greater federal oversight are needed to build the public sphere in places where wealth and power are distributed unequally. Since those who control the resources in Blackwell and Dahlia are well connected to powerful politicians at the state level, they are likely to prevail when changes in the social arrangements are proposed at the local or state level. We saw that Dahlia's former superintendent, Jack Peabody, was praised for keeping costs down, and white school administrators frequently bypassed opportunities to bring in federal programs to benefit the disadvantaged because they might increase costs or entail federal oversight. In Blackwell we saw many public programs effectively commandeered by local politicians and made part of the patronage system because there is little accountability.

Federal programs like food stamps, Medicaid, and Head Start have been crucial sources of support for the rural poor. Children in the families we met in Blackwell and Dahlia would be even worse off without the assistance they receive from federal programs. The fact that these programs include federal oversight means they are generally less vulnerable to manipulation by the local elite who might try to use them as rewards or punishment. Recall that Creed Parker could not prevent the man he fired from receiving food stamps, and federal projects are required to have a diverse board of directors, so Diana and Charles Smith and Coach Wilson have a voice and hear about opportunities for the poor that are available to communities like theirs. Federal programs and federal rules can equalize opportunity and, with rigorous oversight, are less likely to be captured by the local and state elites who benefit from the status quo. As unpopular as the ideas are in an era of downsizing government, a public works job program and a universal family support program that provides a floor below which families cannot fall would be an enormous help to the poor we have met, most of whom work and struggle to patch together a livelihood in an economy with scarce jobs and low wages and no benefits.

But fundamental changes are down the road. As Skoepel has shown in his historical analysis, government decentralization and competition among regional economists, as well as long-standing family support and widespread America support and widespread support policies, will bring nation's social arrangements nearer to meeting its goals of meeting the nation's closer to meeting its goals of determining. But history as well as contemporary events are likely to be a long time coming.

There is, however, one strategy that can help the poor in both rural schools. A decent education, for example, would immediately expand the base of an educated workforce. Education is always the first step in creating opportunity and disadvantage in the lower and middle class. Joanne and John Johnson, for example, who have backgrounds behind them when they went to college. Diana Smith and Coach Wilson, for example, have their plantation childhoods with little chance to attend college. Everyone who has attended high school, and everyone who finished has some second chances. For many, education is implied, an avenue for upward mobility. Opportunity in America's poor communities is now an American's poor communities is now improving, not because of the work of government, but because of the work of local communities and their determination to provide opportunities for their children.

One thing that makes establishing a base of opportunity, as we enter the twenty-first century, is complete turnaround in America that every American child is entitled to. Of course, also a strongly held tenet of the work of poor children would require efforts in poor places like Blackwell and Dahlia, where the local control in these places is at risk. As argued by Jonathan Kozol, Alex Kotlowicz,
Gray Mountain, they see, unities' best interests, and in the institutions the
put resources into public.
A place where inequality, Gray Mountain, is more visible sector that is open to
resources and, perhaps, needed to build the public distributed unequally. Since
Dahlia are well connected, they are likely to prevail when
at the local or state level.
Peabody, was praised for its frequently bypassed
educational system. In Blackwell we
ded local politicians were little accountability,
and Head Start have been closed in the families we
are off without the assistance. That these programs
tly less vulnerable to misuse, them as rewards or
prevent the man he fired, are required to have a
Smith and Coach Wilson
poor that are available to
federal rules can equalize
is likely to be captured by
us quo. As unpopular as
ent, a public works jobs
that provides a floor
mous help to the poor we
atch together a livelihood
ind no benefits.

But fundamental changes in American social arrangements seem far
down the road. As Skocpol and her colleagues and Jill Quadagno have
shown in their historical analyses of social policy, America's commitment to
government decentralization and local control, combined with fierce com-
petition among regional economies that is reinforced by powerful politi-
cians, as well as long-standing ambivalence toward racial integration, have
prevented such changes time and time again. Public investment in broad
family support and widespread work opportunities would certainly bring
America closer to meeting its promise to all citizens. It would make the
nation's social arrangements more closely resemble those in Gray Mount-
tain, assuring greater equality of opportunity through the public sphere.
But history as well as contemporary trends suggest that such a change will
likely be a long time coming.

There is, however, one straightforward policy that would immediately
help the poor in both rural and urban America: creating good public
schools. A decent education, like that available in the nation's suburbs,
would immediately expand the poor's cultural tool kit in significant ways.
Education is always the first step for those who have moved from poverty
and disadvantage in the lower class to stability and opportunity in the
middle class. Joanne and John Martin left their poor farm and mountain
backgrounds behind when they finished high school and went on to col-
lege. Diana Smith and Coach Wilson escaped the devastating poverty of
their plantation childhoods when they finished school and went on to col-
lege. Everyone who has "made it" in Blackwell and Dahlia finished school,
and everyone who finished school and went to college has left
poverty behind. Education is, just as the American Dream has always
implied, an avenue for upward mobility for individuals. But most schools
in America's poor communities do not offer that opportunity.

One thing that makes establishing good schools a viable policy idea, even
as we enter the twenty-first century, is that doing so does not require a
complete turnabout in American social welfare policy. And the idea that
every American child is entitled to a good public education is a well-
established part of American ideology. Local control over education is, of
course, a strongly held tenet, and it is clear that creating good schools to
serve poor children would require challenging local control, at least as it
works in poor places like Blackwell and Dahlia. Our allegiance to the prin-
ciple of local control in these places, as in the inner-city schools described
by Jonathan Kozol, Alex Kotlowitz, William Julius Wilson, and others,
protects bad practices and absolves us all of responsibility to provide equal opportunity for all American children. The system cries out for change.

The public schools used by the have-nots in Blackwell and Dahlia are chaotic and ineffective because a bad form of local control goes unchallenged. No one holds accountable administrators and teachers who fail to do their jobs, and there is little support for principals and teachers who try to improve the schools. Petty patronage politics dominate decision making, and school jobs are rewards for the loyal lieutenants who form the base of the pyramid of political power in the community. Everyone acknowledges the schools’ failure, even the elite and other have who blame the parents and “elected” school boards for these districts. Of course, everyone agrees that these school-board seats can be won only with the acquiescence, if not the active support, of these same elite families.

Education is not only the key to individual mobility in these communities. It is also the necessary catalyst for political change. Coal operators and plantation bosses deliberately restricted access to education in the late 1800s and early 1900s because they recognized its potentially disruptive impact. Even now some plantation bosses are said to resist efforts of literacy workers to reach their employees. Local politicians like Judge Bobby Lee King in Blackwell and Charles Smith and Michael Long in Dahlia say their communities need economic independence before there will be political independence and true democracy. They recall the economic sanctions leveled against those who sought change, and they see day to day the way economic dependency translates into political dependency. They need a critical mass of people acting independently, and they believe that independence must have its roots in jobs that are not controlled by the elite. They know that in the past those who were educated left. Out-migration has always been, and continues to be, a component of maintaining the status quo. Indeed, the elites promote out-migration when they blackball troublemakers and resist diversification or job growth.

But those who are educated and do stay or return to their home communities—the Martins, the Smiths, Coach Wilson—actively participate in political life and community institutions as critical, public-minded citizens. Those who work for change in Blackwell and Dahlia, like community leaders across the nation involved in economic development efforts, see that economic diversity is the foundation of a vital and independent middle class. A community with a vibrant middle class is a developed community, as Robert Putnam found, in which the civic norms include trust, and businesspeople can invest and show this analysis to be right. They see the need for new development, especially skills and education. Homegrown institutions are fragile, and companies that supported schools when the elite is open to new commitment to community development seem intractable and resistant.

Still, people’s ability to think for transforming the current system is the ability to find better ways to develop institutions. Effective schools would either find ways to improve or leave for opportunities elsewhere. Poverty in greater numbers. Yet those with a real education are unlikely to achieve mobility. There is no doubt that educated people are not chronic.

When schools are merely products of discriminatory neglect, it takes special faith in an education. If federal funding by Republicans replaced the local control that ran amok, and made a meaningful investment in children, many more would achieve individuals, like the tiny emerging generation breaking down the walls that surround the world. More community groups, educated participants, as in Gray Mountain, participate, establishing new educational institutions.

Creating good schools in the mainstream, suburban America, in the funding of education with nation, the economy is healthy and participants. Gray Mountain, “local control”nergy in the community. But in Blackwell and Dahlia, these principles sustain poverty. Changing the quality of schools will, of course, require local participation.
responsibility to provide equal system cries out for change. in Blackwell and Dahlia are of local control goes unchallenged and teachers who fail to principals and teachers who try to dominate decision making, tenants who form the base of unity. Everyone acknowledges having who blame the parents. Of course, everyone agrees with the acquiescence, if not.

Social mobility in these communities is critical change. Coal operators access to education in the larger than its potentially disruptive are said to resist efforts of literal politicians like Judge Bobby Long in Dahlia say once before there will be political and economic sanctions. They see it's their way to the day the way it is dependency. They need a and they believe that independent controlled by the elite. They see the left. Out-migration has meant of maintaining the status when they blackball troubles.

return to their home communities actively participate in political, public-minded citizens. and Dahlia, like community development efforts, see that it control and independent middle class is a developed community. civic norms include trust, and businesspeople can invest and grow with confidence. But while history has shown this analysis to be right, it has also shown how hard it is to create jobs and new development, especially in remote places where workers lack skills and education. Homegrown businesses, while important and good, are fragile, and companies that can be attracted to these communities, even when the elite is open to new jobs, are generally footloose and show little commitment to community development. Thus poverty and underdevelopment seem intractable and the status quo firmly entrenched.

Still, people's ability to think and vote more independently holds promise for transforming the current structure. Critical thinking facilitates their ability to find better ways to make a living and create new social institutions. Effective schools would create these critical thinkers, who then would either find ways to improve themselves and their communities or leave for opportunities elsewhere. But in either case they would escape poverty in greater numbers. Young people who graduate from high school with a real education are unlikely to depend on welfare, far more likely to achieve mobility. There is no mystery here. Study after study shows that educated people are not chronically poor.

When schools are merely patronage delivery systems or targets of discriminatory neglect, it takes special intervention by a mentor to get a child an education. If federal funding—and, more important, federal accountability—replaced the local control that has permitted these schools to run amok, and made a meaningful educational experience available to poor children, many more would achieve the American Dream. And these individuals, like the tiny emerging middle class in Dahlia, would contribute to breaking down the walls that seal off these communities from the rest of the world. More community groups and organizations would have educated participants, as in Gray Mountain, instilling new habits of democratic participation, establishing new civic norms of engagement.

Creating good schools in these communities that are worlds apart from mainstream, suburban America requires replacing local control and local funding of education with national standards and equitable funding. When the economy is healthy and participation in political life is widespread, as in Gray Mountain, "local control" can release initiative, leadership, and energy in the community. But in the feudal kingdoms of Blackwell and Dahlia, these principles sustain the two-class society that perpetuates poverty. Changing the quality of schools in places like Blackwell and Dahlia will, of course, require local participants and commitment—people who
want to see change and will work for it. But another thing we have seen in Blackwell and Dahlia is that these potential reformers are already there, working quietly in some cases, despairing about the prospects for change in others. A national program to ensure good public schools, accountable and challenging, would unleash the energy of existing change agents as well as would-be activists. Just as the new goals and procedures of the Family Support Act transformed the way the same people acted in the social welfare programs in Blackwell, a vigorous, well-designed national education intervention could change the old ways of running schools. It could be a vehicle for local community leaders to gain more power and unleash their energy and creativity. We know how to make good schools, and we know what they look like. We need the will to make them available to America’s poor children.

The path out of poverty is remarkably similar across all three communities described here. Poor people who achieve mobility have been purposefully guided toward graduating from high school and often college, even though that achievement is a huge leap from the everyday context in which they formed their cultural tool kits. Some were prodded and inspired by a mother or father, others by an aunt, grandmother, teacher, nun, coach—anyone who took a personal interest and showed them options beyond their immediate surroundings. Others had the opportunity to see life outside their community, by visiting relatives in another city, for example, or joining the military. But when we take into account all that we have seen about poverty and culture and politics in Blackwell, Dahlia, and Gray Mountain, there is one factor that stands out. In every case, a good education is the key that unlocks and expands the cultural tool kits of the have-nots, and thus gives them the potential to bring about lasting social change in their persistently poor communities. With good public schools available to everyone, the have-nots would no longer be isolated in worlds apart from the haves, and poor communities like Blackwell and Dahlia would no longer be worlds apart from the rest of America.
Another thing we have seen in reformers are already there, at the prospects for change in public schools, accountable and rating change agents as well as procedures of the Family people acted in the social well-designed national educa-
f running schools. It could be more power and unleash their 
good schools, and we know 
them available to America's 
ilar across all three commu-
eve mobility have been pur-
gh school and often college, 
from the everyday context in 
Some were prodded and in-
, grandmother, teacher, nun, 
t and showed them options 
s had the opportunity to see 
es in another city, for exam-
into account all that we have 
Blackwell, Dahlia, and Gray 
In every case, a good educa-
cultural tool kits of the have-
g about lasting social change 
good public schools available 
isolated in worlds apart from 
cwell and Dahlia would no 
ca.
Table 1. Social and Economic Indicators for Blackwell, Dahlia, and Gray Mountain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BLACKWELL</th>
<th></th>
<th>DAHLIA</th>
<th></th>
<th>GRAY MOUNTAIN</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>36,300</td>
<td>31,800</td>
<td>22,500</td>
<td>18,700</td>
<td>31,500</td>
<td>35,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>-12%</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>-16%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born in state where now residing</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>6,700</td>
<td>5,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-headed households</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>1,100</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portion of all households</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Births to teens (portion of all births)</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of wedlock (portion of all teen births)</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduates</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduates</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age men</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age women</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age men with work disability</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment by family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with no workers</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with one worker</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with two or more workers</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family income, median (in current dollars)</td>
<td>13,000</td>
<td>18,100</td>
<td>9,000</td>
<td>14,600</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income per capita (in current dollars)</td>
<td>4,700</td>
<td>7,400</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>6,500</td>
<td>6,200</td>
<td>13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families in poverty</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with incomes less than 50% of U.S. median</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data from U.S. Census, County and City Data Book, and U.S. Vital Statistics
Note: Data for Blackwell and Gray Mountain are averaged data for actual study county and a neighboring county; for Dahlia data is sum of study county and a neighboring county. Raw numbers are rounded to nearest hundred. 1980 U.S. median family income was $21,023, 50% cutoff used is $9,089; 1990 U.S. median was $35,700, 50% cutoff is $19,999 (given data constraints).
### Table 2. Social and Economic Indicators for Central Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, Northern New England, and the United States

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Population</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>367,076</td>
<td>356,864</td>
<td>108,529</td>
<td>103,889</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-headed families with children (portion of all families)</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Births to teens (portion of all births)</strong></td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of wedlock (portion of all teen births)</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduates</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduates</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment rate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age men</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age women</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment by industry</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural-resource based</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, communication, public utilities</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and trade</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, insurance, real estate</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household income, median (in current dollars)</strong></td>
<td>10,632</td>
<td>15,321</td>
<td>9,519</td>
<td>15,036</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income sources</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage and salary</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public assistance</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty rate</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Kentucky counties included here are: Adair, Bath, Bell, Breathitt, Casey, Clay, Clinton, Cumberland, Elliott, Estill, Fleming, Floyd, Garrard, Green, Harlan, Jackson, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Laurel, Lawrence, Lee, Leslie, Letcher, Lewis, Lincoln, McCreary, Madison, Magoffin, Martin, Menifee, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Owen, Perry, Pike, Powell, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Rowan, Russell, Wayne, Whitley, and Wolfe. West Virginia counties are Baroz, Fayette, Logan, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Raleigh, and Wyoming.

*Mississippi counties are Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tipton, Tishomingo, Tonti, and Tunica.

*New Hampshire counties are Coos and Carroll.
Table 2. Social and Economic Indicators for Central Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, Northern New England, and the United States (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Central Appalachia</th>
<th>Mississippi Delta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>293,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>70,488</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Families with children</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-headed families with children (portion of all families)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of wedlock (portion of all teen births)</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduates</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduates</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment rate</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age men</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working-age women</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment by industry</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural-resource based</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation, communication, public utilities</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services and trade</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, insurance, real estate</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household income, median (in current dollars)</td>
<td>10,953</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income sources</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wage and salary</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employment</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public assistance</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mississippi counties are Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Desoto, Holmes, Humphreys, Issaquena, Leflore, Parap, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington, and Yazoo.

*New Hampshire counties are Coos and Carroll. Maine counties are Aroostook, Franklin, Oxford, Piscataquis, and Somerset.
Figure 1. Population of Blackwell, Dahlia, and Gray Mountain, 1870–1990

Figure 2. Adults (25+) with a High School Degree, 1940–1990

Figure 3. Employment Rates for Men, 1940–1990

Figure 4. Employment Rates for Women, 1940–1990

Data for all figures from U.S. Census statistics
Figure 3. Employment Rates for Working-Age (16–64) Males, 1940–1990

Figure 4. Employment Rates for Working-Age (16–64) Females, 1940–1990
Figure 5. Family Income Distribution

1960

1970

1980

1990

Note: Family income is grouped data. Cuts: 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990 median: $10,000 for 100%, $20,000 for 200%, $30,000 for 300%, $40,000 for 400%, $50,000 for 500%, $60,000 for 600%, $70,000 for 700%, $80,000 for 800%, $90,000 for 900%, $100,000 for 1000%.
% to 100% median
% of median or less

Note: Family income is grouped data. Cutoffs are: 1960 (median $5,620), $3,999 for 50%, $5,999 for 100%, and $9,999 for 200%; 1970 (median $9,867), $4,999 for 50%, $9,999 for 100%, and $24,999 for 200%; 1980 (median $21,023), $9,999 for 50%, $19,999 for 100%, and $49,999 for 200%; 1990 (median $35,300), $19,999 for 50%, $34,999 for 100%, and $74,999 for 200%.
Figure 6. Employment by Industry

1930

1960

1990

- Service-related: trade, insurance, real estate
- Transportation, public utilities
- Manufacturing

Source: Prepared by ERS based on census data.


Source: Prepared by ERS based on census data.

more)

and the Mississippi Delta: oyment, 1960