

formers were involved in. While the section on Richard Pryor's work seems more celebratory than others, the work is accessible and pulled together quite well. It weaves together some important issues in popular culture, cultural history, and media studies; it tackles class differences in relation to concerns about representation in the African American community; it presents varying images of black womanhood and it takes to task the American claim of equal access and opportunity.

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**Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2004).**

And they're all made out of ticky-tacky,  
And they all look just the same.

— Malvina Reynolds, "Little Boxes" (1962).

Folksinger Malvina Reynolds's acidly critical suburban anthem succinctly expresses a widely held view, especially among left-wing intellectuals. Suburbs, especially those in the United States, the premier suburban society, represent urban sprawl and the accompanying wasteful use of resources and environmental pollution; divide middle-class citizens who can escape the central city from working-class folks who cannot; reinforce patriarchy, particularly during the post-World War II period; produce alienation and conformity; and manifest white flight and its accompanying entrapment of African Americans in decaying urban ghettos. While he does not address all points of this indictment, Andrew Wiese shows that envisioning suburbanization from an African American perspective yields markedly different assessments of urban decentralization and of the migration and civil-rights phases of African-American history. This is an important book, as Wiese expertly deploys the concepts of race, class, and gender to demonstrate both the similarities and the differences between European-American and African American suburban experiences. In addition, he persuasively argues for significant differences between African American suburbanization in the North and the South. Historians of race relations and the civil rights movement, as well as urban and suburban historians, will find here much to spark debate and to stimulate further research. In particular, issues of motivation and class should provide foci for discussion. But no matter how these issues are resolved, *Places of Their Own* will force us to reconsider the nature and meaning of twentieth-century American suburbaniza-

tion.

Wiese divides African American suburbanization into four periods: 1900-1940; 1940-1960; 1960-1980; and the 1980s and 1990s. During the first forty years of the century, he argues, African Americans moving to city peripheries were predominantly working class. Joining Canadian historical geographer Richard Harris, he emphasizes the variety of settings in which suburbanites lived. Only a handful of middle-class blacks occupied neighborhoods approximating the classic picture of white suburbs, and these were generally found in proximity to Southern black colleges. Working-class men flocked to industrial suburbs in the north, and working-class women led the way to domestic-service suburbs, where they could often be found living near the homes of the elite whites whom they served. Like working-class whites, black suburbanites often built their simple homes themselves and then used them for economic support, renting rooms, keeping gardens and livestock, and falling back on their homes in times of hardship or misfortune.

After 1940, new suburban governments extended their power over cities' peripheral zones, and one product was the use of zoning and other land-use ordinances to squeeze out African American suburbanites and to discourage other blacks from moving to the fringe. Where official action failed to accomplish new forms of segregation, white violence stepped in. "When it came to race," Wiese notes, "arson was as suburban as the backyard barbecue grill during much of the postwar period" (100). Federal action, too, through the New Deal Federal Housing Administration and the postwar Veterans Administration, sought to keep the suburbs lily-white, their efforts aided and abetted by white realtors. Urban-renewal programs pursued the same goal. Nevertheless, rising incomes allowed middle-class African Americans in increasing numbers to achieve the same suburban dream that attracted so many European Americans during these years. Wartime and postwar federal housing policies, while generally working to keep African Americans out of areas desired by European Americans, did facilitate suburban construction for blacks adjacent to existing African American concentrations. Thus, as the initiative in suburbanization passed from working-class to middle-class African Americans, the pre-1940 suburban experience provided continuity in spatial terms with post-1940 developments. Wiese argues that, as the civil-rights era began, political activism paralleled, and was strengthened by, a grassroots drive to improve living conditions in both northern and southern urban communities through suburbanization. The black press celebrated pioneers who integrated previously all-white neighborhoods, and African American real estate brokers gleefully aided the process. In the North, black suburbanization took the form of racial transition in previously white neighborhoods or new construction in older black neighborhoods, but in the South, African American suburbanization proceeded through construction of new black communities on the urban periphery. Southern sub-

urbs were the fruit of negotiation with European-American officials, who conceded access to suburban land in order to deflect attempts to integrate white neighborhoods, and thereby maintained segregation. For Southern blacks, equality in housing was the only achievable goal, but accepting residential segregation did not imply blunting their concurrent drive for integration in public accommodations.

Despite expansion of suburbanization during the period 1940-1960, in the latter year only 14 percent of African Americans lived in suburbs (Reynolds Farley, "The Changing Distribution of Negroes within Metropolitan Areas: The Emergence of Black Suburbs," *American Journal of Sociology* 75 [January 1970]: 516). Between 1960 and 1980, African Americans fought to expand their numbers against stubborn European-American resistance. "As whites moved to the suburbs, they did everything they could to prevent blacks from following" (247). African American success paved the way for a massive wave of suburbanization during the century's last two decades, when black suburbanites doubled their numbers, by 2000 making up one-third of the total African American population. Nevertheless, racial lines remained clearly drawn as the US entered the twenty-first century, with African American suburbs remaining for the most part separate and unequal.

Wiese expertly handles the problem of scale. He provides a national-level portrait of the trends he describes, but he illustrates both the general and the specific with detailed portraits of particular developments such as the Downriver area south of Detroit, Chagrin Falls Park near Cleveland, Dallas's Hamilton Park, and Maryland's Prince George's County. As effective as he is in describing what black suburbanites did, however, he has too little evidence to answer the question why they became suburban while other African Americans did not. Such an explanation cries out for comparison, and Wiese's focus on those who moved to the suburbs precludes systematic comparison of those who moved out from central cities with those who did not. Black suburbanites may have shared the suburban ideal held by whites, as Wiese claims, but the *reason* for their mobility may have been because they alone were able to act upon a goal shared with their central-city fellows.

The problem of motivation is intertwined with the issue of class. For African Americans, status within American society does not necessarily correspond with standing in their own communities. Pre-1940 black suburbanites were certainly members of the larger American working class, but it does not follow that they were regarded as such by other African Americans. If not (and he provides no evidence on this point), then Wiese's argument for a shift in the class composition of black suburbia loses force. Among African Americans, black suburbanites may have enjoyed middle-class standing both before and after Wiese's 1940-1960 watershed; only their status within American society as a whole changed. This issue holds ramifications for the problem of explain-

ing activism. If suburbanization and protest were merely two faces of African American striving for equality, as Wiese contends, should such activism be understood as located within the working class, the middle class, or both?

Probably no historical work can answer all the questions it raises, and the fact that these important issues are unresolved should not detract from the calibre of Wiese's achievement. *Places of Their Own* makes a powerful case for giving renewed attention to the concept of space as we explore the fundamental problem of race in history. Whether we are thinking of suburban homes or suburbanites, Wiese has demonstrated that they did not all look the same.

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**Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890–1970* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).**

Tourists are not supposed to stay. At least not any more, they are not. For the most part we do not expect that the bus loads of American tourists who bundle onto Vancouver cruise ships to settle down when they get off the boat, open up all-you-can-eat restaurants, speculate on the local real estate market, and end up on the Board of Trade in a few years' time. Even the long-term tourists, the Asian language students who fill the Vancouver public library to capacity each day, are only meant to stay for a while, boosting sales of video-games while they are here certainly, but not becoming the mainstay of the local economy. One of the fascinating things about Michael Dawson's new book, *Selling British Columbia*, is the reminder that this was not always so. Up to the 1920s in this western province (and probably later in some regions), tourist promotion was immigration promotion. Come, called the local boosters, look around. And stay.

The early part of this book is, in other words, a world apart, both from our present era and from what came only a few decades later. *Selling British Columbia* is also different in the kinds of questions it asks about the history of tourism and the places where it goes looking for answers. Dawson's book is about the sellers, the promoters and the boosters. In a way, it is like Paul André Linteau's, *The Promoters' City* (a book Dawson cites) in that it tells us about how a place was packaged and made ready for economic development by a coterie of busy-bee entrepreneurs and civic-minded patriots. And the comparison, especially in the early years from the 1890s to the 1920s, is more apt than it might first appear. For the early tourists, despite all their desires to escape the enervating effects of modern life in the bracing western mountain air, nonetheless saw in this province great possibilities for industrial and commercial devel-