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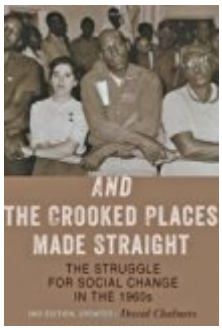

David Chalmers. *And the Crooked Places Made Straight: The Struggle for Social Change in the 1960s.* Second Edition. The American Moment Series. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013. xviii + 208 pp. $27.00, paper, ISBN 978-1-4214-0822-4.

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Commissioned by Zachary J. Lechner (Centenary College of Louisiana)

Across the United States in the 1960s, Americans struggled to change society by organizing on college campuses, protesting in the streets, and experimenting with alternative lifestyles. In the second edition of ***And the Crooked Places Made Straight: The Struggle for Social Change in the 1960s***, David Chalmers examines how moral outrage at injustice developed into students forming groups to raise awareness about injustice, and weighs the legitimacy of various avenues of creating social change. Chalmers also assesses the legacies of 1960s social movements and their effects on American institutions. The title, taken from Isaiah 45:2 and Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington speech, aptly captures the author's thesis. Chalmers argues that the transformation came through a recognition that American society needed to change, yet, "however challenging the new ways of looking at the world might be, their long-run effect would be determined largely by the ways in which they were translated into both national and local organizations and institutions that would shape governmental and social behavior" (p. xvii). The author's personal belief in nonviolence and community-based organizing is prevalent throughout his book and reflected in his earlier accomplishments and experiences: he spent time in jail with King in St. Augustine, Florida, and served on President Lyndon B. Johnson's National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence. Chalmers begins his book in the 1950s, explaining the social and cultural context in which the baby boomer generation grew up. He juxtaposes the hallmarks of social and economic prosperity, technological advancement, booming populations, and happy white families moving to picturesque suburbs with an undercurrent of emptiness, isolation, and paranoia portrayed in literature, movies, Cold War policy, and the writings of C. Wright Mills.

Chalmers uses ***Brown v. Board of Education*** (1954) as a starting point to explore how government intervention, consciousness raising, and preestablished social structures in the black community all worked to create a tangible force of social change. The civil rights movement under

King's direction, he contends, utilized established social structures within the black community to change the social and political fabric of the South. Chalmers's assessment of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) is much more critical and dated. "The irresolvable conflict between King and SNCC," he writes, "was that he and SCLC [Southern Christian Leadership Conference] were using local turf to fight national battles within the system while SNCC's young activists sought to develop local grass-roots organizations and power" (pp. 29-30). The fundamental differences in the two group's organizational structure coupled with his dim views of black power leads Chalmers to assess SNCC as a failure in creating social change. Briefly, he points out that the civil rights movement had no effect on economic inequality and assesses the Johnson administration's plan to end poverty in America. Chalmers then highlights the Warren Court and Southern 5th Circuit Court of Appeals as the driving forces behind making equality the focus of the federal judicial system. This judicial focus on equality, inclusion, and fairness caused, Chalmers argues, "the South to accept a new way of life" (p. 53).

In his overview of campus revolts, the counterculture, and the antiwar movement, Chalmers asserts, "the campus and antiwar dissent resulted in social turmoil that did much to make the Vietnam War unbearable and topple the presidency of Lyndon Johnson, but it failed to create the theory and organizational means for developing a Left tradition or an enduring student political culture" (p. 68). Chalmers favorably assesses the Berkeley free speech movement and the fledgling Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), as he finds that the organizations' practice of civilized, nonviolent participatory dissent was derived from the civil rights movement. Chalmers's tone becomes more dismissive when describing the New Left and antiwar organizations' increasing radicalization as the decade wore on. Under such heading titles as "The Decline into Madness" (p. 86), Chalmers contends that the New Left became irrelevant and self-destructive, and that it failed to create social change because it deviated from its original purpose put forth in the Port Huron Statement. Further, he points out that the counterculture was absorbed into the free market culture and failed to create an enduring culture of opposition. Chalmers argues that, by the end of the decade, no one knew if the upheavals of the 1960s were an isolated, generational phase or something more permanent, and what, if any, their lasting effects would be.

Moving beyond the age of optimism, Chalmers explores the transition from the 1960s to 1970s by analyzing second-wave feminism and the media's effect on the Vietnam War. The war pushed the media away from its traditional role as "well-censored patriotic cheerleader" to capturing the gritty reality of war and covering the floundering of presidential administrations (p. 106). Turning to the women's movement, Chalmers spotlights female leaders in the southern civil rights movement and asserts that "a woman's sex was involved in all the ways that she was perceived and treated by her society" (p. 157). He concludes his overview of women's liberation with a discussion of the female conservative standouts of the 1970s and 1980s: Phyllis Schlaffly and the campaign to end the Equal Rights Amendment and Sandra Day O'Connor's appointment to the Supreme Court.

Chalmers concludes his overview of 1960s-era social change with a sweeping assessment of the legacies and continuities of the period. He contends that "the sixties decade turned out to be no 'end to ideology,'" and points out that the era's enduring legacy is the drive of liberals and conservatives to create their ideal version of American society. Campuses filled with complacent students, Chalmers argues, while the constellations of social movements broke into a scattering of special interests groups vying for individual power rather than uniting as a cohesive vehicle of social trans-

formation. Chalmers then delves into Ronald Reagan's law-and-order and family-values conservative backlash in the 1980s, following this trend into the 1990s and 2000s with Newt Gingrich's Contract with America and Grover Norquist's Taxpayer's Protection Pledge. Chalmers ends his work by pointing out President Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton's ties to Saul Alinsky and the liberal tradition of grassroots organizing for social change.

Fitting the second half of the twentieth century into 193 pages is no small feat. Chalmers has successfully crafted an engaging and thoughtful overview of a period defined by tumultuous social change. His rendering of the New Left, particularly the later, radical strains of SDS, as a failure, is outdated, though. "The campus and antiwar dissent," he maintains, "failed to create the theory and organizational means for developing a Left tradition or an enduring student political culture" (p. 68). While Chalmers sees a failing student political culture, it should be noted that this position neglects to acknowledge that SNCC, SDS, and other organizations paved an avenue of dissent for such movements as gay rights and the environmental movement. Notably, less radical early SDS participants, the Berkeley free speech movement, and civil rights participants receive favorable assessments in the book, as they sought to create social change in the spirit of King's beloved community and through preestablished social and governmental structures. Chalmers's assessment of the legacy of sixties-era protest in the twenty-first century is also somewhat lacking. Although he mentions the legacies of Alinsky evident in Obama's and Clinton's politics, the author makes little of the media frenzy created by conservative talk show hosts concocting conspiracy theories surrounding President Obama or of the rehashing of the decade's pros and cons each time a former activist has published a memoir. While the Left may not dominate the current political culture, the struggle to create a more equal nation pioneered by leftist social movements in the 1960s continues to play out on the nightly news in the twenty-first century.

Overall, the second edition of ***And the Crooked Places Made Straight*** provides a thoughtful, though dated, overview of the sixties. Although the events of the 1960s are fifty years in the past, Chalmers's well-written book demonstrates that this decade of social change still continues to preoccupy Americans.

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