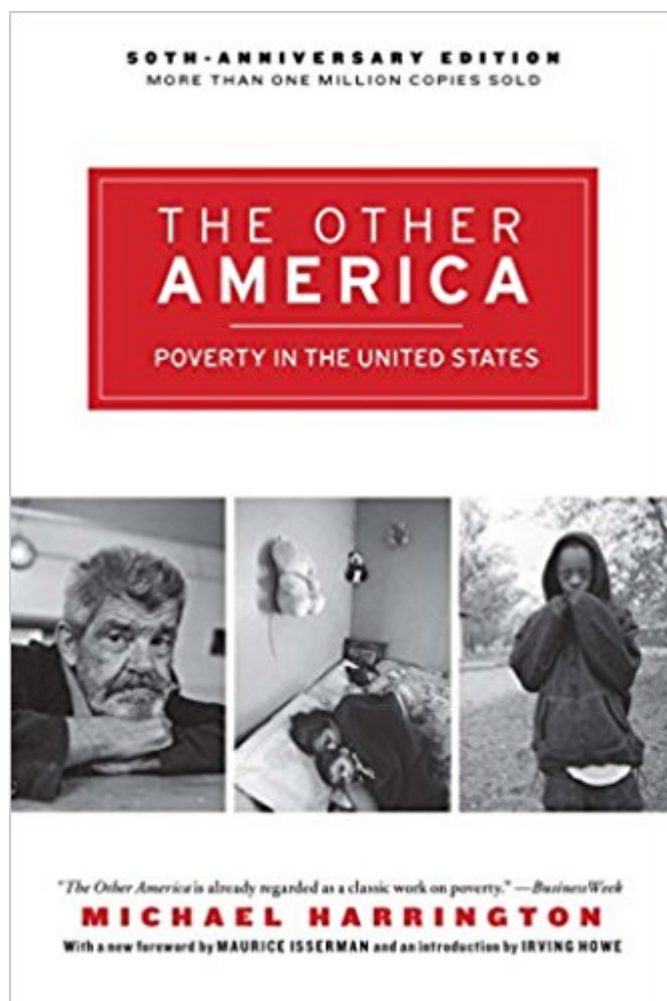


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# The Other America: Poverty In The United States



## Synopsis

In the fifty years since it was published, *The Other America* has been established as a seminal work of sociology. This anniversary edition includes Michael Harrington's essays on poverty in the 1970s and 1980s as well as a new introduction by Harrington's biographer, Maurice Isserman. This illuminating, profoundly moving classic is still all too relevant for today's America. When Michael Harrington's masterpiece, *The Other America*, was first published in 1962, it was hailed as an explosive work and became a galvanizing force for the war on poverty. Harrington shed light on the lives of the poor—from farm to city—and the social forces that relegated them to their difficult situations. He was determined to make poverty in the United States visible and his observations and analyses have had a profound effect on our country, radically changing how we view the poor and the policies we employ to help them.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Harrington's classic account of an isolated and self-perpetuating underclass was originally published in 1962. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

"An excellent book—and a most important one." —The New

Yorker” “Mike Harrington has made more Americans more uncomfortable for more good reasons than any other person I know. For most people, that would be achievement enough. But for Mike it was only the beginning because the more he saw that was wrong with America, the harder he fought to make it right. • Senator Edward Kennedy The Other America is a “scream of rage, a call to conscience. • The New York Times Book Review

One hundred years from now people attempting to understand what happened to this country called America, will be going to the libraries of the future and looking for "The Other America: Poverty in the United States". They will be doing this not because Michael Harrington's book happened to have been popular for so long in contemporary sociology studies, but they will have come to realize tomorrow just like today the book rings true. A concise and scholarly explanation of the evolution of the America that most social science books neglect to mention. Somewhere down the road of time, when people are trying to figure out how what happened here, this is one of those places that they will find the origins of America's accelerated downfall.

Actually read this book the first time 50 years ago when it came out. Reading it this time, it has caused me to see how much no longer applies, how much has changed for both good and bad, and how the original program has gone awry. For far too many, history begins today, which is so far from the truth. At least this book will give you a feel for what things were like fifty years ago instead of taking the word of some revisionist which is too often the case.

This should be required reading for every American. It is even more relevant now than when it was written. A deeply beautiful and profoundly compassionate book. I wish I'd known Harrington. I hope to read everything he wrote!

It's an interesting subject, and Harrington, as I recall, was very influential in the Kennedy White House.

A very moving account of poverty in America, written in the early '60's but sadly still relevant in 2015.

Few works of contemporary non-fiction have had more lasting impact on the social consciousness

of the overall society from which it arose than "The Other America", Michael Harrington's now classic tome on the egregious conditions under which what we would now call the "underclass" lived in mid-20th century American society. With an uncommon verve and uncanny precision, Harrington painstakingly detailed the disgusting and shocking realities of life for those many millions of Americans of both color and ethnicity living lives of desperate poverty in the midst of the affluent society. Millions of readers, myself included, were shocked to discover the extent to which this world coexisted with our own, and many of the social action programs that arose in the 1960s and thereafter used this book as a kind of reference guide to the realities of poverty in contemporary society. Indeed, what is most disturbing about anyone re-reading the book is the discovery of how little conditions have changed for those who through the accident of birth, color, and ethnic origin, find themselves inexorably trapped in the vicious cycle of poverty. Sadly, for all the glad-handing of politicians and the proclamations by global corporations of the new and more widespread prosperity of the 1990s, the sobering truth is that very little progress has been made. Indeed, in more recent books such as William Finnegan's excellent "Cold New World", Harrington's basic thesis of the co-existence of a starker, poorer, and powerless populace left stranded to live lives of quiet desperation is reconfirmed, putting the lie to the many proclamations of universal opportunity and promise that politicians now ballyhoo. The book, which was first published in the early 1960s, was required reading for most introductory sociology and contemporary history courses, and millions of young academics first learned of the extent of the national problem through a reading of this book. It is, in that sense at least, a modern classic. Harrington's basic thesis is incontrovertible; poverty is extensive and endemic, and is usually hidden from the view of most affluent Americans due to the ways in which the two subcultures coexist in modern society. Through the de-facto residential segregation of the two elements of the society, there is little meaningful contact, and the media tends to ignore the facts of the existence of the underclass, portraying arch-types which conform more to the sensibilities of the more affluent segments of the society that regularly view its programming and enforcing unrealistic images of what exists. As a previous reviewer commented, we no longer habituate the same environments, and we tend to avoid all unnecessary contact with anything to do with this other world of poverty and want. What Harrington originally described in such anguished and inflammatory terms, hoping to purposefully ignite America's slumbering conscience, has instead become a permanent feature of our conscienceless socio-cultural landscape. It is a sad truth that Harrington's book is as timely and as shocking today as it was some forty years ago. His account of the fate of millions of impoverished people of color and ethnicity remains as cogent and as relevant as it was then. Despite the long and tortured history of the social

legislation that attempted to rework this problem in the decades since, the reality of the situation seems to be that nothing much has changed in terms of the life-chances and hopes of the members of the underclass. It remains a mainstay of introductory courses in social stratification, providing an excellent overview of the myriad of the sociological, political, and economic issues surrounding the underclass, and is a wonderful example of just how important one man's vision of the truth can be in orienting others meaningfully toward rectifying a social problem. Poverty may remain, as they say, always with us, but the shocking truths found in this book still sheds the light of day into an unappetizing aspect of contemporary society we all should be aware of.

I was led to this book by a college professor stating this was the classic writing on the issue of understanding poverty and learning how to end it. He wasnt wrong, great read, interesting history and opinion-altering statistics.

This is a must read, and sadly, an issue that has NOT been resolved yet in American society. It breaks my heart to be reading about poverty in the 50s and realizing that the same words that describe poverty in the 50s could be the exact same words that could be used to describe poverty in the 21st century. Essential reading.

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