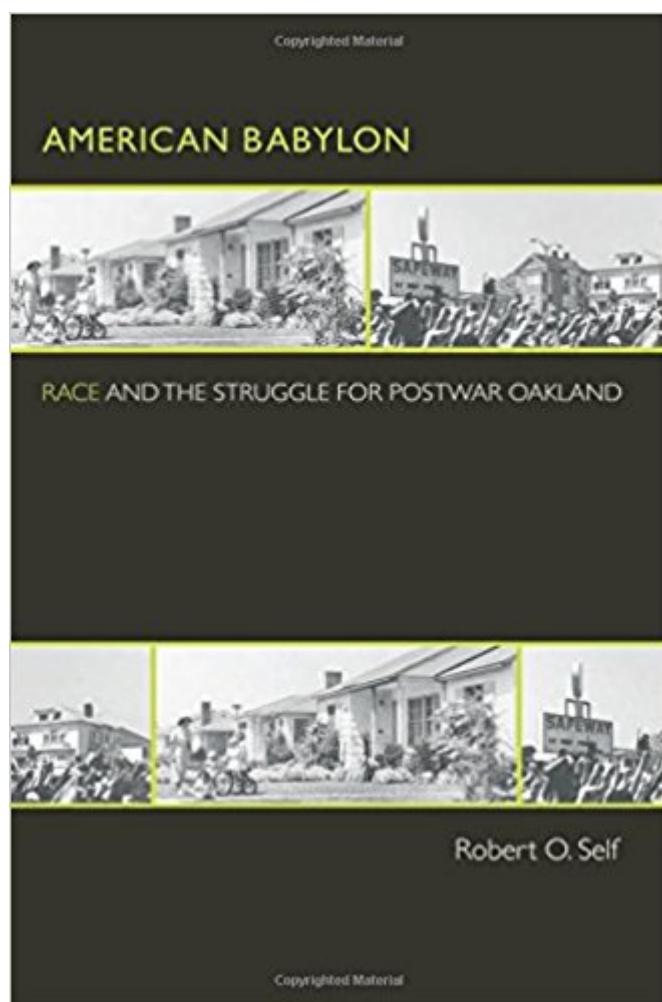


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# American Babylon: Race And The Struggle For Postwar Oakland (Politics And Society In Modern America)



## Synopsis

As the birthplace of the Black Panthers and a nationwide tax revolt, California embodied a crucial motif of the postwar United States: the rise of suburbs and the decline of cities, a process in which black and white histories inextricably joined. *American Babylon* tells this story through Oakland and its nearby suburbs, tracing both the history of civil rights and black power politics as well as the history of suburbanization and home-owner politics. Robert Self shows that racial inequities in both New Deal and Great Society liberalism precipitated local struggles over land, jobs, taxes, and race within postwar metropolitan development. Black power and the tax revolt evolved together, in tension. *American Babylon* demonstrates that the history of civil rights and black liberation politics in California did not follow a southern model, but represented a long-term struggle for economic rights that began during the World War II years and continued through the rise of the Black Panthers in the late 1960s. This struggle yielded a wide-ranging and profound critique of postwar metropolitan development and its foundation of class and racial segregation. Self traces the roots of the 1978 tax revolt to the 1940s, when home owners, real estate brokers, and the federal government used racial segregation and industrial property taxes to forge a middle-class lifestyle centered on property ownership. Using the East Bay as a starting point, Robert Self gives us a richly detailed, engaging narrative that uniquely integrates the most important racial liberation struggles and class politics of postwar America.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Winner of the 2005 James A. Rawley Prize, Organization of American Historians  
Winner of the 2005 Best Book in Urban Affairs, Urban Affairs Association  
Winner of the 2004 Ralph J. Bunche Award, American Political Science Association  
Winner of the 2004 Best Book in North American Urban History, Urban History Association  
"[A]n original and complex explanation for the urban crisis that transformed Oakland, California, from 1945 to 1978. . . . By placing the history of Oakland and its African American community in a new theoretical framework that emphasizes suburban growth, tax revolts, and battles over land, jobs, and political power, Self has challenged historians to reconsider the way that they study postwar black urban communities."--Albert S. Broussard, *Journal of American History*  
"[M]eticulously researched. . . . [A] compelling, complex, and original account of black and, to a lesser extent, white community politics in metropolitan Oakland California from 1945 to 1978."--Cynthia Horan, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*  
"By placing the history of Oakland and its African American community in a new theoretical framework that emphasizes suburban growth, tax revolts, and battles over land, jobs, and political power, Self has challenged historians to reconsider the way that they study postwar black urban communities."--Albert S. Broussard, *Journal of American History*  
"If you are concerned with the postwar city, race, economics, and politics, get this book and read it."--Kenneth Durr, *American Historical Review*

Winner of the 2005 James A. Rawley Prize, Organization of American Historians. Winner of the 2005 Best Book in Urban Affairs, Urban Affairs Association. Winner of 2004 Ralph J. Bunche Award, American Political Science Association  
Winner of 2004 Best Book in North American Urban History, Urban History Association

perfect condition

Pretty good condition. Fast shipping. (: Had oil marks on the cover but it's ok.

An interesting presentation. Unfortunately, for me, the author's acceptance and presentation sour the overall power of his text. That there was institutional racism I do not argue, but that the Unions and communist/marxist groups were portrayed as 'supporting' the black causes without criticism or context leaves me less comfortable. Oakland is home and includes the majority of the period of the book. Recommended for reading, but with a fore-warning on perspective.

Book was never used in class and purchased for no reason. I read a couple chapters but never got into the whole book.

I read American Babylon after hearing about it on the radio, and came away impressed with the author's ability to make a remarkably complex process - the interplay of suburban development, urban decline, racial politics, and civil rights - accessible to an amateur such as myself. The book lays out a persuasive explanation of why things are they way they are in Oakland, and by (my) extension in many urban areas around the country, including my own hometown of Brooklyn. In doing so it seems to me to be the best sort of historical analysis: rigorous, remarkably detailed, and carefully documented, but useful to the public at large. Highly recommended.

This book is a fascinating looking at the growth of Oakland's suburbs, the problems that brought to Oakland proper, and how everybody responded. It has a wealth of detail, is extremely well-researched, and is an easy read.

I received the book brand new, no complaints.

Robert Self's "American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland" deserves the attention of grassroots political activists as much as academics. It is a brilliant analysis of the post-World War Two business strategy for Oakland, California and the boom (and boomerang to Oakland) in housing and jobs elsewhere in Alameda County that resulted. Self shows how the decline of Oakland was the other side of the coin in the creation of new communities in the open spaces nearby. He lays out the class and race contexts of the suburbanization process and shows the consequences for and responses by the labor movement and African Americans to the changes that were wrought. "American Babylon" thus provides, for example, an interesting account of the Black Panther Party. Finally, using this region in northern California as a case study, the book examines the origins of the anti-property tax movement, when the suburbs regime went sour. Since California is still embroiled over the same issues this book addresses -- taxes, urban revitalization, de-industrialization, racial equality, and the political and environmental impacts of suburban growth -- Robert Self's "American Babylon" could not be more timely.

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