

had given America a new national hero, Martin Luther King, Jr. The African American students who were from urban areas said no; those African American students who were from decidedly middle class backgrounds echoed their brothers and sisters but qualified their statement by saying that there had been changes (voting and the opportunity to get an education) but overall racism from whites had not changed and in many ways had gotten worse. The urban students were far more pessimistic, believing that things would never change. They saw no hope.

My class, I am certain, is really no different from many others that are taught throughout the country. These classes represent a microcosm of the nation at large. Given that and the American propensity for social amnesia, we are going to need tougher and more critical studies of the civil rights movement, not only to remind those who never knew but also to figure out why we are continuing to live with a debilitating racial dilemma.

Colgate University

Charles Pete Banner-Haley

**Kenneth O'Reilly. "Racial Matters": The FBI's Secret File on Black America, 1960-1972. New York: The Free Press, 1989. Pp. viii, 456. Cloth, \$24.95.**

O'Reilly legitimates the dream of Martin Luther King, Jr., for America. "No better gauge of the moral state of the United States' domestic policy exists than the history of the federal government's relationship with its most disadvantaged citizens." O'Reilly has no use for the dilemma imposed by the FBI. "Black America's FBI story is also America's story, but it evokes a sense of shame, not celebration." Therein lies a problem.

At no matter what level this work is used, considerable commentary is required for balance. For example, O'Reilly makes at least thirteen references in the language of police brutality and not one in the language law enforcement officers prefer, "excessive use of force." The felicity with which the book is written makes it all the more important to find balance.

At the undergraduate level, students must be alerted and sensitized to the option of taking a more pragmatic and less morally righteous tone than that of O'Reilly. O'Reilly does furnish enough facts and interpretations to develop other less strident moral scenarios. At the graduate level, students must be alerted to the fact that, at a very fundamental level, its own records are being used to discredit the government.

Some of this material has previously appeared in the *Journal of American History* 75 (June 1988), 91-114, the *Journal of Southern History*, 54 (May 1988), 201-32, and *Phylon*, 48 (March 1987), 12-25. Graduate students might find it useful to compare passages and documentation. The author of this review has put together a comparison of the documentation between the book and *The American Historical Review* article which he is willing to share, but which seems too extensive to be included here.

Fifty-five pages of footnotes and twenty-three pages of bibliography can leave a misimpression. African Americans are quoted but generally from FBI or secondary sources, rather than from African American sources. For example, two of the three indexed references to *Ebony* magazine are documented from FBI files, rather than from the magazine itself.

O'Reilly offers shock that the FBI and J. Edgar Hoover should regard blacks as problems for white America, rather than the other way around. O'Reilly portrays FBI insouciance at legislation designed to empower black America with citizenship rights, whole and entire, everywhere and immediately, with stupefaction. His portrayal of the politicians in charge of the FBI is far more understanding of the realities at hand. Because of its easy style, this book could catch on and exert great influence in many sectors of society.

The binding of the book sent to me for review broke simply with the use required for this review.

Thomas Nelson Community College

Raymond J. Jirran